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# *Hugh's sacrifice*

Cecil Marryat Norris

*Hug 7*

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# HUGH'S SACRIFICE.

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WEST CORNER ST PAUL'S CHURCHYARD.







"Cameron will take his old place, won't he, Sir?"

# HUGH'S SACRIFICE

BY

CECIL MARRYAT NORRIS

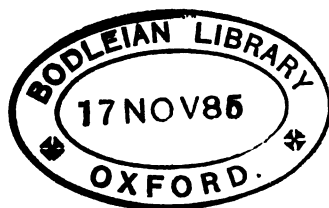
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SEVERAL SMALLER ONES IN THE TEXT.





## “ HUGH’S SACRIFICE.”

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### CHAPTER I.

#### “ SHORT TOIL, ETERNAL REST.”

A COLD dismal evening in early March : the rain, which has continued unceasingly throughout the day, is driven by the wind against an uncurtained window, by which a lad has been for some time impatiently waiting.

“ I wish father would come,” he says at last ; “ I can’t finish this boat without him.”

“ I wish he would come for his own sake, Frank ; he must be wet and tired enough, don’t bother him about the boat to-night.” Dr Cameron had been all day riding about the country visiting his patients : it was now past six o’clock, but still he did not come.

The boys waiting for him were so much alike that you could see at once that they were twins.

The one who spoke last, called Hugh, drew the window curtains, and made up the fire, and soon after, hearing the horse’s feet on the gravel path, both boys rushed to the door to let their father in.



As he stood in the passage, the water streamed from the rim of his hat and his mackintosh, but he only



"I've been wet through."

laughed, and told them to stand back, until he had got rid of his outer clothing.

"I've been wet through, and partly dry again, several times to-day, my boys. Make a good fire, against I come down." It was some minutes before he did so, in dry clothing, but looking very weary.

"Father," began Frank, "I've been watching for you so long; my boat won't balance properly after all my trouble."

"Let it alone now, Frank," urged Hugh. "Ring the bell for father's dinner, and let him have it in peace."

But the Doctor could not eat his dinner when it came, and presently it was sent out untasted.

He looked very pale, and shivered now and then, but he said it was only fatigue, and that he should be "all right" after a cup of tea.

Hugh looked anxious, and Frank was silent for a while, for both the boys loved their father.

They would have been strange boys had they not done so. Their mother had died when they were infants, since which time their father had never parted with them. They were all the comfort left him in this world, and for twelve years he had filled the place of both father and mother.

They studied with the clergyman of the parish, and being quick boys, stood pretty well in school attainments.

To-night they had to prepare their work alone, Dr Cameron seeming too tired to help them, as he usually did.

He was not able to rest long.

"Please, sir," said a servant, "Maria Smith is come to say you must go directly to see her husband. He's took bad again, and is just ramping."

"Bother her husband," called out Frank. "Let him ramp. I wouldn't go out again to-night, Dad, for anyone."

"Tell her I will come shortly, Mary," said Dr Cameron, suppressing a little sigh at the prospect of a walk of a mile and a half up hill in the rain.

"Must you really turn out again, when you are so tired, father?" asked Hugh. "Ten to one it is half fancies."

"Possibly, Hugh. Smith is a bad hand at bearing

pain, but he has been seriously ill before, so that I cannot judge without seeing him. Don't concern yourself on my account, and don't sit up if I should be late."

Frank, looking very disappointed, stood twirling his boat between his fingers.

"What is it, Frank?" said his father, kindly. "What's amiss with the little affair?"

"It's lop-sided, father. I only want you to file it a little so as to balance it. It wouldn't take long."

"Leave it here, my boy. I will see what I can do by-and-bye," said Dr Cameron, as he left the boys again alone.

"Just like him," murmured Hugh. "He thinks of every one before himself; I wish I were old enough to help him."

"I shall take jolly good care not to be a doctor," replied his brother. "I wouldn't be at the beck and call of a set of idiots like Maria Smith. Last time her husband was 'ramping,' it turned out to be nothing at all. I can't think how people can be so selfish."

And satisfied at having at last gained his point, he betook himself shortly to bed.

Dr Cameron did not feel "all right" by any means next morning; indeed he was so ill that it was with difficulty he did his day's work, and by night was suffering so much from acute pain in his side, that he was obliged to give in and ask a brother doctor to help him. But neither rest nor medicine relieved him, and before

another day was over, he was dangerously ill from inflammation of the lungs.

The boys remained at home to be with their father, who felt it probable that his illness might be fatal. On the evening of the fifth day of his attack he called Hugh to him—Frank he had purposely sent on a message, that he might speak during his absence.

“My boy,” said he, in a faint, slow voice,—ah! how strangely altered from a few days back—“there is but little chance that I shall get over this illness; don’t interrupt me, Hugh, I have not much time or strength to spare, and I have much to say to you.

“I do not judge only from my own feelings of weakness; Dr Jervis confessed this morning that he fears there is little hope for me. If it should be so, and God is about to take me home, remember, my dearest boy, that I leave Frank in your care. You are the same age, certainly, but yours is the stronger character, and I look with confidence to your helping him, as far as you can, to fight his battle here. Dear Hugh, you know as well as I, thank God for it, that this life is but one long battle for us all. Frank has not learnt this yet, but whilst you live, Hugh, remember my dying words to you, were to strive to strengthen your brother’s character, to shield him as far as you can from evil, and to influence him only for good. Remember also, my dearest son, that it is my greatest comfort in leaving you behind, to feel that by God’s grace you can and will do this for him. Do you promise?”

Hugh was too much overcome to do more than sob out—"Always, always, dear father, so help me, God, I will." Then hearing footsteps approaching, he ran to his own room to calm himself, lest his grief should distress him he loved so dearly.

Hugh had his father's nature over again. Frank, though he loved his father and brother, loved his own self far better. And this failing had unfortunately been increased through his being of a delicate constitution. On this account he had been petted and indulged, and had grown to look upon it, as a matter of course, that he should be the first object of everybody's care.

There was no jealousy on Hugh's side—the love between the brothers was very strong, and it was to Hugh that Frank turned in every difficulty. Hugh helped him with all his hard lessons. Hugh bore the brunt of every scrape into which they got. Hugh pitched into the boys who bullied them, so that he, too, unconsciously helped to foster in his brother his natural self-love.

But two more days of suffering, only one short week since the boys were watching for their father's return, and they were orphans. With a white face, but tearless eyes, Hugh to the last had kept his place by his father's side, ministering to him in his moments of agony, and resolutely forcing back the tears that strove so hard to come. To the very last he had held his hand and

whispered words of love and comfort in his ear, and had not shrunk even from the sight of death, coming to him for the first time in the person of his own father. For poor Frank it was too much ; his violent grief was so distressing, and his dread of seeing his father die so great, that he was obliged to be removed from the room.

But when at last all was over, and the necessity for restraint past, Hugh went to him and the brothers sobbed out their grief in each other's arms.

The confusion in the house had all subsided, the bustle of sending and receiving telegrams, the enquiries of friends, the excitement of the doctor's visits, all was at an end ; the quiet, the awful quiet of Death was over everything. The boy's Aunt Ethel, their father's only sister, had arrived from London with her husband, and there was nothing left for Hugh and Frank but to realize and to suffer.

Late in the evening following that dreadful day, Hugh crept in alone to the room where lay all he cared most for on earth.

The room was dark, save for the lights at the head of the table where rested the coffin. There, cold and immovable, was stretched the dear form that had never rested from kind works for all around him ; crossed upon his breast lay those unselfish hands at peace for ever, and the kind eyes were closed, and insensible for the first time, to the agony of his child.

As Hugh hung over the coffin, his mind went back to little more than a week ago, when his father was in health, and playing football with them in the field ; he seemed to hear his merry laugh ring through the air, and to see him as active in the game as either of themselves. Prior to this attack, Hugh never remembered to have seen his father ill, and now as he looked at the cold features, so calm and stern and dignified in death, it seemed no more his father, but only a cruel mockery of what he had been.

On his breast lay a small cross made of violets, placed there by Aunt Ethel. The lid of the coffin rested against the wall, with his name and age engraved on the brass plate.

"Aged thirty-nine." So short a life, and yet so full of work for his fellowmen, and above all for his Master in heaven.

The door opened, and Hugh saw Frank standing on the threshold, half-longing and half-dreading to come in.

Hugh went to him and said softly—

"Let us look at him together, Frank, it will help us to give him up, to see how peacefully he lies at rest."

But Frank had no sooner looked at his dead father's face than he burst into a passionate appeal.

"Oh, father, father! I cannot bear it! How could God be so cruel as to take you from us! I love you; love you, father! Why did I not tell you of it when I could."

Then came the bitter remembrance, sure to come to all of us some day, of the many little ways in which he must have wounded him, and of the many neglected opportunities of pleasing him. Ah! if we could only realize in our moments of possession what we should be, left without those we love, could we ever hurt one another as we so often do, not perhaps by actual unkindness as by omitting to show and tell them, all the love we feel. Never, never more, can we tell them of it now; still let us thank God for the blessed hope we have that there is no longer need, that they are able now to read our hearts, and know their truth, as they never could have done by our best efforts here.

As Hugh held his brother closely to him he remembered vividly his father's last charge, and secretly sent up a prayer to God to help him to perform it faithfully.

It was a comfort now to feel how much that father had trusted him; it was a greater comfort to know that God had given him work to set about at once.

As they were leaving the room, Frank's eyes fell upon his little boat, forgotten during the last few days of sorrow. It was lying on the mantelpiece where Dr Cameron had himself put it. How Frank's heart smote him when he found that the fault in it was remedied. Ill as his father had been that night, he had not failed to keep his word, and spare a little more time from his much needed rest for the sake of the child he loved so dearly.





## CHAPTER II.

### CHANGES.

IT had long been a promise that the boys should stay with their aunt for a few weeks, that they might see London, so that it seemed quite a natural arrangement when some days after the funeral Aunt Ethel said to them, "Dear boys, your uncle will remain here for a short time to see all business matters settled, but we have arranged that you shall return to town to-morrow with me, until we can fix upon a school to which to send you."

Both the boys looked pleased; they had always longed, as do all boys, for real school life, and the prospect of an entire change of scene was just now very agreeable.

"How soon shall we go to school, Aunt Ethel?" asked Frank.

"Probably after Easter," she answered; "it wants six weeks to that yet. In the meantime you will have plenty to see in London. You must collect all you care to keep amongst your private things, and in the afternoon call on your friends and say good-bye to them for the present."

Aunt Ethel little thought what she was doing when she bade the boys collect all they cared for. They set to work immediately, piling the floor of their room with boxes, books, and tools of all sorts, but their greatest ingenuity was exercised in contriving travelling arrangements for rabbits, bantams, pigeons, a squirrel, and a fat puppy.

It pained Aunt Ethel to tell them they could not take their pets, for she had children of her own, and knew how much their live things were to them, so she said, gently :

"Children, these poor things would die cooped up like that ; indeed you cannot take so many now. Try and think of some one who will take care of them for the present."

Seeing how disappointed they looked, she added, "You know you would not be allowed to take them to school. Suppose you take the squirrel and puppy, and find homes for the rest."

"All right, Aunt Ethel ; and I suppose this little chap won't count," said Frank, taking out of his pocket a tame white mouse, which immediately settled itself between his coat collar and shirt.

Aunt Ethel laughed, "I suppose you must keep the little horror," she said, "only mind it doesn't run over me."

The pup, which was named "Mumps" on account of the fat which encumbered his throat and face, was a Clumber spaniel of two months old, whose mission in

life so far, seemed to be devouring all boots or shoes that came in his way.

The boys having provided him with a good supply of these luxuries, he was quite happy, although shut up in a hamper.

"Now, Hugh, let us call on all we can, for it won't take long. There are but two or three places I mean to go to."

"There are a good many we must call on, Frank, even if we don't call for them. Think how kind every one was when father was ill. I am sure he will not like us to leave them out. First, there is Mrs Lawson, and the Grants, and the Pritchard's, and Hoopers, and some of the poor. I couldn't go without seeing old Potts; and in the evening we will walk over to Little Compton, and thank Dr Jervis for all he did."

Each of the boys gulped down something like a sob; but, thank God, trouble rolls off the young like water from a duck's back, and they had not gone far before they were laughing and talking much as usual.

"Not to the Hoopers, Hugh, I can't stand them. It makes me so mad to hear them speak of father as 'pa,' and 'poor pa,' too. Why do people always speak of the dead as 'poor'?"

It is a question often asked by much older people. Why, indeed, should the Blessed Dead be so spoken of? I suppose many do it from a foolish habit only. They seem to forget that Death, instead of being the conclusion of our life, is in reality its glorious Beginning.

I think there would be less dread of the physical pain of death, if we were brought up from childhood to look for it as the commencement of all that is worth having, and the Eternal Holiday, to gain which we have been put to school here on earth.

The boys first went to see old Potts.

"Well, well, lads," he said to them, "he's got home before me, after all my years of helplessness and pain. There was he, as strong to look at as a man well could be; and here be I, of no manner of use, seemingly, but to try my old woman's patience a-tending of me. But the Lord knows when to take us, and I can't begrudge the doctor all he's gained, though I miss him terrible, that I do."

Potts was ignorant, so far as grammar went, but he did not speak of Dr Cameron as "poor."

Hugh promised Potts some of his father's clothes, which he had looked out for him.

"I would rather burn them than give them to anybody, Potts; but you loved him, and he will like to see you wear them, I am sure."

Then, shaking hands very heartily with the old man, they walked silently away.

They had to hurry over their many visits, as their time was so short, and by the time they had returned from Dr Jervis', were so tired from the excitement of the day, that they fell asleep as soon as they were in bed, even though their hearts were heavy with the consciousness that this was the last night in their old home.



## CHAPTER III.

### LONDON.

WHEN the boys found themselves at the Paddington Station next day, they opened their eyes wider than they had ever done before. It seemed to them wonderful that anybody could ever find their luggage or their way out amongst such a labyrinth of platforms ; but they learnt, even before leaving it, how easily and quickly everything may be managed by method.

Aunt Ethel took it very quietly. She was used to London, and not one of those who think it feminine to be helpless.

"Keep close to me," she said, "and out of the way of the porters' trucks."

Then she walked up to the place where they were taking out the luggage, and stood opposite the railing where the letter M was hung out.

She touched a porter on the arm. "Those seven boxes marked 'Manners' for me, porter ; a four-wheel, please, for St John's Wood."

The boys could not help contrasting her manner with that of an excitable lady near them. With her bonnet

half off her head from the awkward way in which she allowed herself to be pushed about, the bow of her scarf twisted under her left ear, and her whole appearance like one whose mind is disordered, she was trying to force her way inside the railings.

"All in good time, ma'am," said an official good naturedly but firmly, taking her rather ignominiously by the shoulders and ejecting her. "You really must not come inside."

"But that's my box," she gasped, making an ineffectual grab at it, "and there ought to be another one, a black box with a cord on it."

"What name?" asked the man, "there's no address on this."

"Oh, no name, it wasn't directed; but it's a black box with a cord on it."

The man grinned. "There's a sight of black boxes with cords on 'em. Where from, mum, was it labelled?"

"Oh, I don't know. I came from Wellington, no Taunton; but I don't know if it was labelled."

"Can't be responsible for anything if it ain't labelled," said the porter. "You must stand aside, mum, please, till the other goods are sorted out, and then we may come upon yours."

Just then, a porter who had never moved in highly polished circles, did for her dilapidated bonnet, by completely knocking it off her head with the corner of a tremendous trunk he had just hoisted on his shoulders.

It was a mercy he did not take off her head also ; as it was, she was twirled round and deposited in a sitting posture upon a laden truck which another man was preparing to wheel off.

" Bless my heart," laughed the man, "I've got enough already without any more," and both the boys burst out laughing very rudely in her face.



" Bless my heart," laughed the man, "I've got enough already."

She was still gesticulating and chattering about her boxes when they had collected theirs and were ready to start, and the boys were loth to lose sight of her.

Aunt Ethel sat herself back in the cab resigned to a long uncomfortable drive. She had given up the

windows to the boys who were protruding their heads as far as they could. Suddenly Hugh bobbed in again; a great roman-nosed horse, whose head nearly touched their window, had made a snap at him.

"Now then, wake up stupid," called out the driver, and Hugh found he had some experience to gain as well as the lady at the station.

Presently, as they left the more crowded part of London, the noise lessened a little; and they were able to hear each other speak and to drive quickly.

Mrs Manners lived in a quiet part of St John's Wood, where omnibuses passed constantly for all parts of the City; and Mr Manners found it a convenient distance from his office, for he was a literary man, and wrote and edited a great deal.

Their aunt stopped and kissed them as they entered the house.

"Children, remember this is your home at all times, and you must try to love and trust us as you would your own parents, had they lived."

Then she brushed off the tears which had gathered in her eyes, and said:

"Come up now with me, and see your cousins."

The younger children had not been told of their mother's anticipated return, and when she opened the door, she watched them for a minute unobserved. Georgie, about six years old, was just then occupied in acting groom to Maud, who was a year younger, and



was supposed to be a restive horse undergoing cleaning. She had taken off her stockings, and was holding her clothes very high, whilst Georgie, with a brush left by the housemaid after blacking the grate, was working away at his sister's legs, and hissing meanwhile after the fashion of the grooms in the mews near them. But as they caught sight of "mother" they flew to her with a scream of joy, and she caught up Maudie, and cuddled George, regardless of the black legs and dirty brush, which were included in her embrace.

She had another child who had been for years an invalid from spinal weakness, so she left the boys to make acquaintance with their little cousins, whilst she went to Herbert, who was expecting her.

The delicacy of her boy was a great cause of anxiety to Mrs Manners; sometimes better and sometimes worse, still the doctors yet hoped that he might outgrow his weakness.

For three years, ever since he had fallen from the bannisters, down which he was sliding, he had lain on his back, and suffered at times much pain.

His natural high spirits had succumbed to so much confinement, and by the side of his cousins, who were rather older than himself, he looked a very white and frail boy.

But excitement made him brighter this evening, and he and Mumps soon struck up a mutual friendship. Poor Mumps had very wet furrows down his fat cheeks,

the result of his long day's imprisonment, and his gratitude at being set at liberty was so great that he was ready to lick any face or hand near him.

In a few days Mr Manners returned. He was guardian to Hugh and Frank, and they both stood a little in awe of him ; for though a kind-hearted man, he was stern in manner, and did not care for the society of children.

When at home he was generally grave and pre-occupied, and being used to his own quiet boy, did not make allowance for the high spirits of Hugh and Frank.

• The latter, through his thoughtlessness and disregard for the comfort of others, soon got into trouble.

It had been a persistently wet day, and excepting for what could be seen from the windows, there had been nothing to amuse the boys.

They had been cooped in all day, and were now standing at the library window, enjoying themselves, I am afraid, at the expense of their fellow-creatures.

They talked and giggled at first in undertones, as Uncle Fred was reading, and making notes as he read. He had returned home but a short time, wet and cold, and consequently not disposed to make the best of things.

At some rather noisy joke and scuffle between the boys, he laid down his book and looked up over his spectacles.

He did not speak, but glared at them till their eyes

fell and they grew very hot. Then he resumed his reading, and Frank, partly from nervousness and partly from fun, made a small explosive noise of laughter, which was not lost upon his uncle.

After this they behaved with some propriety for a while, until the effect of their uncle's stare had worn off, and unfortunately they found a new object of ridicule.

"Here comes Psyche," cried out Frank, as a very fat old woman, breasting the wind and displaying anything but a graceful figure, fought manfully along.

She certainly was screwing up a most absurd face, from the combined effect of the wind and rain beating upon her, and as she passed close under the window, a fierce gust which threw up her umbrella, blew it completely inside out, and forced her to twirl round to recover breath, which made both boys burst into a roar of laughter, whilst Frank executed a *pas seul* of delight.

"Boys," said Uncle Fred, sternly, "if you must behave like babies, you had best go to the nursery. One would think you were six years old instead of twelve."

Hugh was sorry to have vexed him, but Frank did not appear at all contrite, and a minute after, when his uncle was apparently again absorbed in his book, buried his face in his handkerchief and pretended to be overcome by his sorrow.

This was intended solely for Hugh's benefit, but was

seen by Mr Manners, who caught sight of Master Frank, just as he removed one corner of his handkerchief to wink facetiously at his brother.

His uncle rose, and opening the door, said angrily, "You can stay upstairs, young gentleman, till I send for you." And with a very indignant face, Frank marched out of the room.

Hugh went straight to his uncle.

"It was as much my fault as his, uncle. He would not have done it alone."

But his uncle did not answer, and presently Hugh ventured to ask :

"May I go up to him, Uncle Fred?"

"With all my heart," answered he, "so long as you leave me in peace."

But Uncle Manners was vexed with himself for speaking so sharply, and added :

"I'm not angry with you, my boy, but Frank must learn to mind when he is spoken to."

So Hugh went up, and for some time had hard work to convince Frank that he had been in error, but he prevailed at length, and later on when Frank met his uncle, he said bravely :

"I am sorry I vexed you, Uncle Fred," and Mr Manners seemed almost to have forgotten the cause of affront, and said readily :

"All right, my boy, speak out like a man, and acknowledge when you are wrong, and no one will be angry with you long."



## CHAPTER IV.

### "METHUSELAH."

THE restraint of a London life after the entire freedom to which they had been used in the country made the boys find it less agreeable than they had expected. They had been to so many places of amusement, and seen so much that was new, that it appeared quite long ago since they had left Compton Magna.

They felt older and more independent also, for Mr Manners thought that if boys of twelve years old could not take care of themselves, it was quite time they should learn to do so, and Hugh and Frank were only too glad to fall in with his views.

"Boys," said Uncle Fred, on his return home one evening, "I have heard of a school for you."

"Where is it, uncle ; when did you hear ?" they asked eagerly.

"I received a letter to-day from your old friend Mr Lawson, who recommends it. It is in a small town called Fitycoombe in Somerset, not many miles from Compton Magna, so that you will not be far from friends."

"We have driven through Fitycoombe often, but there was no school there that I can recollect."

"No, Mr Everard has only moved there lately. From all I can hear, he is a most excellent master, and I hope you will go to him in another ten days, when the Easter term begins."

The boys were in high spirits at the news, but Herbert's face was very downcast. The poor boy's life had been far brighter during his cousins' visit. Hugh's unselfish disposition had made him devote much time that he would gladly have spent otherwise, to the sick boy's amusement, for his ill-health had made him several years behind his cousins in knowledge and experience. But his patience and helplessness were very touching, and for his sake Hugh forbore to rejoice before him at the prospect of so soon leaving.

"Cheer up, Herbert," he said, "you are ever so much stronger than when we came. Who knows but that you'll be going with us next term. We'll leave you Mumps and the squirrel, and 'twill be awfully jolly when the holidays come round."

At last the wished for day arrived. The new clothes, the bats, the desks, and the hamper of eatables packed by Aunt Ethel were ready in the hall. Uncle Fred was to go with them to see them fairly off by train, but could not spare time to leave for longer.

It was April now, and by no means cold, but the boys could not bring themselves to discard their ulsters, which they considered gave them a grown-up and town-bred air. So off they started, rather uncomfortably warm certainly, but very grand and important for all

that. Indeed, I think they would not have minded if Uncle Fred had stayed at home altogether, as he took down their consequence by telling the guard their destination, and begging him to have an eye on them.

The guard pocketed his tip with an immovable face, and proceeded to perform his duty by locking them into their carriage, and so dashing to the ground Frank's intention of getting out to spend some of the money which was already beginning to burn his pockets.

He solaced himself by buying a *Daily News* and *Times* from the newsboy, not that he wanted to read them, but it looked a "swag" thing to have a paper or two, and he tossed the boy a shilling in payment, disdaining change, which made a lady and gentleman sitting opposite look at one another and smile. They took in another passenger at Bath, a boy some years older than themselves. He was a tall fellow, with a swaggering manner, and the three soon struck up a conversation.

"Going far?" asked their new acquaintance, who had a hat box with him, about which he seemed very anxious.

"To school at Fitycoombe," answered Hugh.

"Oh, old Everard's, I suppose. I know the place, going down that way myself."

"Is he old?" asked Frank, innocently. "I fancied he was rather a young man."

"Old as Methuselah," said the boy, "and grim as Moses, beard like Aaron down to his knees, and eye-

brows growing out like blackberry bushes: terribly strict man I've heard, and whacks the boys tremendously."

"Quite a scriptural character," said Hugh, laughing. "How many boys does he take?"

"Limited numbers," he replied, "gives him more time to whack those he has."

"Do you know any of the fellows?" asked Frank, hoping that their new friend might have been misinformed as to Mr Everard's character.

"Know lots of them, got a cousin there—comes home every term black and blue, with his bones pretty near through his skin for want of grub—never get meat there, they tell me, unless 'tis horse or cat. Move your feet off my hat box, youngster," he continued, authoritatively, "or you'll scratch it."

The gentleman who was seated near them quietly took up the hat box, and slung it into the netting above their heads.

"Keep it there, my boy," he said, "and it will inconvenience no one. It's safe enough in that bran new case, depend upon it."

The lad was angry at the interference, but was afraid to say anything, and the gentleman continued, good naturedly,

"I can quite remember the first tall hat I ever had, but I was younger than you by many years. It's no longer the fashion to dress boys like little men, and a very good change too."



The tall boy disdained making any reply, and looked out of window and whistled.

He did not talk any more, but chewed apples and cracked nuts, spitting out the skins and shells about the carriage in a very disgusting and ungentlemanly manner; and I think the lady and gentleman must have been glad when they arrived at the next station, when they got out. Before they left, the gentleman said jocosely, "Good-bye, my young friend, take care of your tall hat," and he nodded to Hugh and his brother, and said he hoped they should meet again, as he often stayed at Fitycoombe. The big boy look rather confused at this, and muttered, "Good job you're gone" as soon as their backs were turned.

The guard came up to look after the Camerons just as Mr Jack Sanderson, for that was the tall boy's name, was aiming an apple core at a passenger on the platform, which, as Fate would have it, struck the guard's cheek.

"What do you mean by that?" said the man, angrily, then catching sight of the dirty condition of the floor and cushions, he continued: "Let me catch you messing about the place again, that's all, and I'll trundle you into a third class carriage in no time. Come, clear up all this at once." And he waited at the carriage door whilst Sanderson sulkily obeyed him.

"Change at next station for Fitycoombe, young gentlemen," he said to the Camerons, and in a few minutes they were at Taunton, and had lost Sanderson in the crowd.

"I didn't like that boy," said Hugh, when they were re-seated for the rest of their journey. "I'm glad we have got rid of him."

"Oh, didn't you, I rather liked him, he seemed clever—but I say, Hugh, uncle will never leave us with Mr Everard, if it is all as bad as that chap says."

"Very likely he knows nothing about it. I expect he only wanted to frighten us."

The gradual stopping of the train as it entered the pretty little station at Fitycoombe, made the boys all alive, and shouldering their bats they had opened the door, and were preparing to jump out, when a porter stopped them.

"Steady a minute," said he, as he walked along by the side of the carriage. "You should never get out whilst the train is in motion; I've seen many a bad accident happen that way in my life."

This train seemed never going to stop, it creaked and groaned, and crawled on, till it overshot the mark, and had to retrace its steps after all, but at last it did really come to an anchor, and the careful porter took his hand off the door and released the boys.

"Mr Everard's, I suppose," said he, as he collected their luggage, and put it on the top of the only cab the town boasted.

It was such an antique affair that it swayed perilously on one side as their boxes were hoisted up, and the effect on its occupants, when it moved on, was very like a bathing machine passing over the sea beach.

It was just as well that the boys should have something to laugh at, as their spirits were beginning to flag after their tiring journey, and the description of their future master, as given by Sanderson, weighed a little on their minds.

They could hardly see the street through which they passed, as it was getting dark, but they soon stopped at a queer little gate, which let up a long passage to the front door of the School House, which fronted the High Street, though the back opened upon some of the loveliest scenery in Somerset.

They were standing in the great oak hall feeling very lonely and rather frightened, when a gentleman came from an adjoining room and shook hands with them.

"How do you do?" said he, cordially. "You must be very tired and chilly. Come to the fire, and warm yourselves."

"One of the under-masters, I suppose," said Hugh, as he left them for a few minutes alone. "I shall like that chap, I think."

He was a very nice looking man, apparently about thirty-five years old, with a tall graceful figure, and a quiet dignified face, which was beautiful more from expression than feature. He was closely shaven, and his refined intellectual appearance was so entirely opposite to what they expected in Mr Everard, that they little imagined for some minutes that they were actually in the presence of "Methuselah" himself.



## CHAPTER V.

### AT SCHOOL.

MR EVERARD had of course heard of the great loss which his new pupils had lately sustained, and was therefore anxious to lessen as much as possible the loneliness of their first evening at school, so after a substantial tea he took them to his own room.

He talked to them so kindly of their father, and seemed so interested in the bats and the white mouse, that he won both the boys' hearts before the evening was over.

"What a jolly fellow he is," said Frank. "How that Sanderson crammed us. I don't believe he'll be at all strict, Hugh; he seems to think more about cricket than lessons."

"I don't know about that, Frank. I expect he'll make us work, but he seems awfully nice."

The firm, resolute mouth and chin of their new master had not been lost on Hugh, though perhaps he could not exactly explain what it was that had impressed him.

They had bid him good-night early, and were now in their dormitory preparing for bed. The ordinary school

discipline had not yet recommenced, and they were allowed what time they pleased for this evening.

It was a long room holding six beds, each with the name of its owner placed over it. The first thing the boys did was to read the names.

"W. Metcalfe, Roger I., Roger II., Cameron I. and II., and halloa ! Frank," sang out Hugh, "J. Sanderson ! Why that fellow actually belongs to this place !"

"What a lark !" said Frank, "we'll pay him off for trying to hoax us."

Mr Everard had taken them to the class-room during the evening to see those of their school-fellows who had already arrived. There were but few as yet, the majority being expected next day. Those in the class-room were busy roasting chestnuts and eating all sorts of rubbish when the Camerons went in, and as Mr Everard was with them, welcoming the boys, and talking a little to each, Frank and Hugh had not progressed far in their acquaintance. They were too tired to sit up, and were soon fast asleep in their beds, regardless of the chattering of those who came up soon after.

The clanging of the half-past six bell next morning startled them both into complete activity in a minute. Frank indeed was out of bed almost as soon as it began to ring.

Metcalfe chuckled, "I expect that's the first and last time you'll be so dapper. There's half-an-hour allowed

for dressing, so here goes for twenty minutes snooze for me."

And curling himself in the bedclothes, like a chrysalis, he was asleep again immediately. The other boys seemed in no hurry either, they yawned and stretched, and stared hard at their new companions, and

"How old are you?"

"Where do you come from?"

"What form will you be in?"

And such like questions were poured upon them till Hugh asked :

"Who is Sanderson?"

"Oh, 'Jack Brag,' he's the head boy, older than any of us by a long way. I expect we shall all work with Everard; the younger chaps do most of their work with Dupuis."

Metcalf was proceeding to initiate them into the nicknames of the masters when the bell rang again for ten minutes to prayers, and he and the others leapt out of bed, and scrambled into their clothes, and only half washed, and having gabbled over something intended for a prayer, hurried down-stairs.

"A shave, wasn't it?" whispered Metcalf, as they took their places in the Hall.

After prayers came breakfast, and then an interval of time before the bell would ring for school.

Sanderson, who had travelled to Fitycoombe by the same train as the Camerons, had passed the night with

some friends in the place, and sauntered in soon after breakfast. He seemed a little annoyed at the friendly terms which Hugh and Frank were on with the other boys, and also that they neither of them showed surprise at seeing him ; but he soon made himself agreeable and amusing, and Frank began to think him a most delightful companion.

As time passed on, Sanderson made more of Frank than of the other boys, for reasons of his own. It would be convenient to him to have an ally so sharp, yet easily led as young Cameron, and Hugh saw with regret the great attraction Jack seemed to possess for his brother, and the gradual weakening of his own influence, which was once so strong.

Sanderson also was maliciously pleased at Hugh's evident disapproval of their intimacy, for he had been wounded by Hugh in his tenderest point : self-conceit.

The origin of Jack's dislike was this: being the oldest in the school he had naturally held the head place for some time, and had done so easily, as he was clever enough though indolent ; and having consequently got into a careless way of preparing his work, was disgusted one day at finding himself supplanted by Hugh.

Mr Everard's public reproof of,

"You should be ashamed, Sanderson, to let a boy three years your junior get above you," made him bear Hugh a grudge from that time, especially as he had

not yet been able to recover his lost place, for, delighted at his success, Hugh strained every nerve to retain his position.

One day when lessons were over, and Hugh noticed his brother and Sanderson whispering together, he tried hard to persuade Frank to join him in an expedition.

"Come on, Frank, and let's have some fishing together ; I know of a whopping trout, and I've plenty of bait."

Frank would have consented with pleasure, for he seemed to have seen very little of Hugh lately, had not Jack, who knew how easily he could play upon Frank's dread of ridicule, sneered out—

"Here's Cameron doing the Siamese business again ; but as it happens, your brother promised to come with me this afternoon."

Frank had no remembrance of the promise, but he was too selfish to incur ridicule for Hugh's sake, so he only giggled, and followed Jack.

But it was a dull holiday to Hugh, for his heart was heavy at the estrangement which seemed creeping in between them, and the last words of his dying father were continually in his mind, "Shield him as far as you can from evil."

"What can I do?" thought poor Hugh ; "he seems to be losing all affection for me, I am quite helpless to do anything ;" and he strolled sadly into a little copse



hard by, regardless of his fishing, or the fun of the boys on the river's bank.

But he had forgotton for the minute *all* his father's words: "By God's grace, you can do this." Yes, without that, Hugh was indeed helpless, but it was to be had for the asking, and by-and-bye when he rejoined his companions, it was with his usual happy face, and he was as merry as any of them.

"What were you doing in the copse, all alone?" asked Rogers; "we thought you'd gone back."

But Hugh was busy taking his rod to pieces, and only answered—

"Time's up, Rogers, it's striking the quarter to five. Race me home."

And they both tore off like wild things.

There was one great source of happiness in Hugh's new life, which arose from the deep love fast growing up in his heart for Mr Everard. Perhaps the loss of his father, and the loneliness consequent upon his brother's neglect, made him turn more readily to this affection, though it could be easily accounted for from the character of his master, which was just the one to possess great power over a warm-hearted boy.

He taught his boys more valuable lessons by example, than he could ever instil into them by the purest Greek and Latin, and Hugh so valued his good opinion, that it was always a day marked with a white stone to him if Mr Everard noticed him more than usual,

As they were racing full tilt, as boys do when excited, looking out for no one, they came suddenly upon him round a corner, and Hugh, butting his head into Mr Everard's waistcoat, nearly knocked him down, by the speed at which he was going.

"Oh! I beg your pardon, sir," panted he. "Did I hurt you?"

Mr Everard laughed out heartily.



Hugh butting his head into Mr Everard's waistcoat.

"All right, Hugh; I think you got the worst of it. I've a little breath in me yet;" and he patted Cameron's untidy hatless head before he passed on.

He had called Hugh by his Christian name, and the boy thought of it with a glow of pleasure many times that evening.



## CHAPTER VI.

### HUGH MAKES A FRIEND.

HUGH was idly knocking about a cricket ball across the play-ground one Saturday afternoon waiting for Frank and some others who had promised to have a game, when he heard Mr Everard's voice behind him.

"Why are you not with the others, Cameron? what keeps you here alone?"

"Most of them are gone to bathe, sir. I'm waiting for Sanderson and Rogers and my brother to have a game of cricket."

"I expect you'll wait a long time, then," Mr Everard answered. "I met them a short time ago by the bridge, and they told me they were going for a walk towards Copsley."

Hugh looked disappointed. He felt angry too; for he could not help the conviction that they had never intended to return, and had only used a stratagem to get rid of him.

It was Sanderson who had begged him to go back and get ready the wickets, whilst they ran as far as the market garden to buy fruit.

He stood irresolute what to do with himself. He had no intention of following them against their will, so at length he said—

“Thank you, sir ; then it’s no use my waiting here. I’ll go and have a dip with the others.”

“Unless you like better to come along with me,” said Mr Everard. “I am going for a walk of some miles. Do as you like best,” he added, laughing, “I shall not be offended if you prefer to stay behind.”

“Oh ! I should like much better to go with you,” said Hugh, eagerly. “It is just the day for a long walk.”

So they set off at once on their expedition. Their road lay through a most lovely part of the country ; a wooded hill lay on one side of them, under which the road was cut, and on the other side was a steep ravine running down to the river, which glittered in the sunshine, with here and there some felled trees lying across it forming a temporary bridge.

“How lovely it is,” said Hugh. “It is just like the places they choose to photograph for the stereoscopes.”

“Yes ; and look down there at the little camp the caravan people have made. They are so picturesque that I wish they would stay there instead of coming into the town, as I hear they are to do shortly.”

“Are they coming ? Have they shows ?” asked Hugh excitedly. “I should like to see them very much.”

“They’re not worth seeing, my boy ; all the wonder

of them lies in the representations outside their caravans. If you see the pictures, you see a great deal more than you can by going in, and you also escape hearing a great deal you should not hear."

"Are they all such bad people, then?" asked Hugh, rather foolishly.

"No, I should be very sorry to say, or think either, that they are necessarily all bad people; but it is not the people themselves so much as the rabble you must mix with, and the profanity that often goes on at fairs, that makes me set my face against them. I went to one or two myself as a boy, and heard some things I had never known before, and have, of course, never forgotten.

"We forget the good we hear easily enough, Cameron, but the bad sticks to us very tenaciously. So don't think anything more about the shows, my boy, for I don't intend to allow any of you to visit them; you will remember what I say?"

Hugh answered, "Yes, sir," but he looked wistfully back at the romantic looking little encampment they left behind.

They were nearing their destination now. There was a pretty white house standing back in its own grounds which they were approaching, and Mr Everard said—

"I am going to call on Mr Treherne who lives in this house."

Hugh was a well-mannered boy; he had none of

that foolish shyness which makes some boys run away anywhere sooner than speak to their fellow creatures, so he was quite willing to accompany Mr Everard, and on entering met a lady whom Hugh at once recognized as the same who had travelled with them from London.

She remembered him directly, and after talking to them for a while about other things, said to Hugh—

“And how is your friend with the new hat? Has he introduced you to his cousin, who was in such a terrible condition?”

She and Hugh laughed about it together, and the lady asked then after his twin brother, and how it was he was not with them, and finally begged Mr Everard to let both the boys spend an afternoon with her shortly. He promised to do so some day.

“But not this term though, I think, as we are drawing near the holidays, and they have to work up for exams.”

As they were returning home, Mr Everard enquired of Hugh, to what friend Mrs Treherne had alluded.

“Oh! it was Sanderson, sir; it was about a lot of nonsense he was up to with us, when we were coming down here.”

“Ah! I see. I wish I could think that Sanderson was never up to more than nonsense, Cameron. I am sorry to see him so intimate with your brother. Can’t you step in and prevent it?”

“I have tried, sir, and I do try still, often; but I

don't make any way ; Sanderson is such an amusing clever fellow, that he is much more attractive to Frank than I am."

And after a little, Hugh was led to tell Mr Everard a good deal that weighed on his mind, and of the deep responsibility he felt resting upon him, from his father's committal of Frank to his care. Mr Everard listened very attentively.

"I am glad you have told me this, Cameron. I am very glad you feel sufficient confidence in me to do so. You must not get down-hearted if you appear to be making no way. God tries our faith that way very often, but you may be sure no effort on your part, and no prayer of yours, passes unheeded, though it may seem so to you now."

And when they reached home, Mr Everard shook hands very heartily with Hugh, and thought for some time of the boy in whom he began to feel a deep interest.



## CHAPTER VII.

### "GREAT MARKET."

I SUPPOSE Fitycoombe was about as small a place to gain the name of a town as could well be found in Somerset. People on first going there generally spoke of it as "the village," until they found that by so doing they were treading upon tender ground. I daresay it was natural that the old inhabitants should look upon it with great affection, for it certainly had some very good points.

In the first place it lay in the most lovely part of Somerset, and it was well worth while to climb the hills around for the sake of the view you gained ; and there was a fine bracing air which sent you home with such an appetite, that I think the butchers and the bakers must have driven a capital business.

The strange old-fashioned houses, interspersed without any regard to order with shops, and queer looking cottages, gave the place a quaint and foreign look, and the constant passing through of sheep and cows helped to keep up the offensive idea that it was a village.

Certainly it had a market place and a Town Hall, but they were more for show than use, only coming



into requisition now and then. Tuesday, being market day, was considered quite the excitement of the week, and then was the time to see the farmers of old England.

The stoutest of them generally rode in on the smallest of Exmoor ponies, whilst the younger ones secured the half-broken colts for themselves. The business of the day did not seem heavy. The farmers stood about in knots outside the inn doors discussing the crops and the weather, and after a friendly glass with each new comer would jog home late in the evening with a comfortable sense of having been working very hard.

But the "great market," which took place three times a year, was looked forward to by the school boys as real fun.

Late on the preceding night, and very early in the morning of the day, the putting up and hammering together of cattle pens might be heard, and soon after began the driving in and bullying of the unfortunate animals.

All through the streets these pens were placed, leaving only a very narrow space for passengers. Cows with their calves were tied to the railings of the dwelling-houses, and the bleating of sheep, the yelping of shepherd dogs, and the resounding strokes of the heavy sticks which the drivers applied mercilessly to the flanks of the poor frightened brutes, made "great

market" anything but a pleasant day to most of the inhabitants. The boys spent all their spare time staring out of windows.

"He-up, he-up," bawled a driver to a few terrified sheep, who were required to force their way through a narrow passage, in the face of two or three traps and a crowd of people. The timid creatures were huddling together, and going any way but the right, to escape from the barking and snapping of the dog, whilst the driver, with a tremendously long stick, was hitting them over their heads in a sickening way.

"Brute," said Hugh, "I wish I could turn the tables on him for a bit."

The crowd thinned towards evening, as the cattle were sold and driven away. Then the pens were taken down, and in their place were erected booths for gingerbread and lollypops, and down the road might be seen some smart caravans just entering the town.

"See that comfortable party?" asked Sanderson, pointing to an old farmer of such wonderful circumference, that it seemed a marvel that he did not lie down as prize beasts do, never to rise again. "Bet you a pennorth of gingerbread I hit his old tile with this walnut."

His "tile" was certainly provocative. It had a rim like a bishop's, and was covered with very long drab beaver, which laid all ways, like a field of long grass after a hailstorm.

The walnut whistled through the air, and hit the old fellow with a smart rap right in the middle of his beautiful beaver.

All the boys ducked, keeping only their eyes above the window-sill, and the surprise and indignation on the man's face, as he turned slowly round and looked

up and down for his assailant, was to them delicious.

"Give him another," said one of them.

"Hit him on the head this time," for the farmer had taken off his hat to see if it was injured, and was smoothing it fondly.

"No, no," said another, "fair play; wait till



"Give him another," said one of them.

his hat is on again."

And no sooner was it replaced than the fun recom-

menced, and the incensed old man at last taking in the idea that the walnuts which lay around him must have come from boys' hands, began to stare hard at the school-house windows.

"Lie down flat for your lives," spluttered out Jack, laughing till the tears ran down his face.

The farmer waddled across the street and made direct for the open window, and would inevitably have caught them, had they not crawled on all fours to the far corner of the room, where they stood squeezing one another against the wall, hardly daring to laugh for fear of betraying themselves.

The old fellow peeped in, and seeing apparently an empty room, scratched his head, and muttering, "Pest take 'em! I believe they was at the bottom of it," puffed away to a neighbouring inn.

The boys emerged when he was safely out of sight.

"Best fun I've had for a long time," said Jack; "but I've lost my walnuts, though. Jump out of window, young Cameron, and pick them up."

"Better not let Everard catch you," said another. "'Tis against rules to go into town on market days without leave."

"Fudge! what 'going out' is it, just to pick up a walnut? He's so dapper he'll be in again in a jiffey."

"Don't do it, Frank," said Hugh; "you can't eat your cake and have it, Sanderson. I'm sure you got your money's worth out of those walnuts."

It was always the way ; if there was any risk to be run, Sanderson generally tried to shift it on to some one else.

"Your virtuous brother has such a conscientious soul, Cameron, that I sincerely hope he'll enter the church. He'll make a sweet parson some day."

Hugh laughed good naturedly.

"All I think is," said he, "that if you do break rules, you'd best bear the brunt yourself, instead of drafting it on to a younger chap."

Jack bowed.

"A most noble sentiment ! I feel better already, thanks."

Then he nodded to Frank.

"Come on, I've something to shew you."

They strolled together to the playground, and soon after Hugh saw them deep in conversation. Sanderson was evidently discussing something to which Frank seemed unwilling to agree, or at any rate dissatisfied with. Hugh called him once to join some game, but he answered peevishly—

"Don't bother, let a fellow be, can't you?"

All that evening he avoided being alone with his brother, and seemed pre-occupied and cross, though excited. He and Jack had several whispered conferences, and at supper Hugh saw Sanderson pass a note across the table to Frank. Hugh said nothing, for he was too proud and annoyed to ask for informa-

tion which they evidently wished to keep from him, but he felt hurt and uneasy. He tried to forget his discomfort by writing to Herbert, whose health had improved rapidly during the last three months, and he was no longer confined entirely to his couch, so that his parents had begun to look forward to his entire restoration ; and the great dream of Herbert's life, that he might join his cousins at school, was really likely to be fulfilled some day.

Hugh's assiduity at work, the desperate way in which he ground away to keep his place in his form, and the manly, honourable, disposition of the boy, had made him a great favourite with Mr Everard, and though he did not openly shew this regard for fear of being suspected of partiality, he had written on the subject to Mr Manners, praising the boy very highly.

Uncle Fred had mentioned this in a letter to Hugh, congratulating him, and saying how pleased it had made them all.

It was therefore with great delight that Hugh was looking forward to the approaching holidays, when they were to go with their uncle and his family to a small country house near Richmond, the only drawback to Hugh's enjoyment being that Sanderson, on Frank's entreaty, had been invited to spend the holidays with them.



## CHAPTER VIII.

### THE PLOT.

WHAT really went on between Sanderson and Frank Cameron was as follows :

"Look here, Cam, you're no fool as I very well know, so I am going to trust you with a secret. I wouldn't do it with every boy in the school, so you ought to think yourself highly honoured by my confidence."

Frank coloured and looked pleased at this flattery, and answered :

"Say on, Jack, I'm not likely to split upon you."

"Well, it's just this ; I've pretty nearly made up my mind to a spree to-night. It's an innocent one enough, if old Everard were not such a tight hand as he is. I mean to slip out by-and-bye and see the shows, and I'll take you with me if you're a good boy."

Sanderson knew that his own pocket money was nearly exhausted, and that Frank had lately had some sent him, and was always willing to share his with any one, as long as it lasted.

"There'll be no end of fun," continued Jack, "and it's a downright shame of Everard to keep us so close. In any other school the boys would have been treated to

all the shows, so I won't stand it any more, and shall take French leave."

"But how?" said Frank, flushing with excitement at the idea; "we should be found out, shouldn't we?"

"Bless you, we shouldn't be found out. We're too dodgy for that, as long as you are man enough to keep your own counsel, but if you peach to that sanctimonious brother of yours, he'll report us in no time."

"That he wouldn't," said Frank, hotly, "he never did a dirty thing yet."

Sanderson saw he had taken a wrong step by abusing Hugh, so he patched it up.

"Well, perhaps I'm too hard on him. I'm aware he's a very highly-principled fellow and all that, you know, but too much of that is absurd. Boys must have fun, and there isn't a school in England where they are not up to all sorts of larks. In most schools some or other of the fellows are out every night in the year. It's nothing, really; those rules are made, but they don't go for much."

Frank looked doubtful.

"I thought you told me the other day that Mr Everard had threatened to expel any boy that was caught out of bounds at night, ever since that affair that happened before we came."

"Ah, but he's got to catch us first; now just attend, and don't prate so. Come down this way, those fellows over there are watching us. I've found out that Everard dines out this evening with the Norreys, so he'll be miles



out of the way, and the drive home is so long, he can't be back till the shows have been long closed, and we safe again in bed ; and as t'other fellow is shut up in his room, who'll be the wiser, you young duffer ? ”

“T'other fellow” was the under master, young Mr Dupuis, who was suffering from inflammation in one of his eyes, and was therefore obliged to lay by for a few days.

“I should like it uncommonly,” answered Frank, “if I only felt sure of not being found out. Somebody there might see and recognise us.”

“Oh well, if you're funky, give it up, by all means, but I must say I'm disappointed in you. I thought you had no end of pluck, so I chose you above the others ; but there are plenty who'd be only too glad of such a chance.” And Sanderson pretended to saunter away from Frank.

“Stay, Jack, don't be in such a hurry ; I haven't refused, and as to being afraid, I'm not afraid of Everard or anybody else.”

And Frank felt as if he had said something very grand.

“Tell me,” he went on, “how can we get off without the others in our room knowing about it ? ”

“Easily enough. They're never in bed five minutes before they're snoring. It will turn out all right enough, believe me ; only remember this : if I trust you just as I might a big chap like myself, you must take your share of the risk, and not cling on to me if there's any row. Not that there will be, only we ought to under-

stand one another. If I'm caught, I don't blow upon you, and *vice versa*: honour bright?"

"Of course," said Frank, proudly, "I'm old enough to know that much at any rate. None but a sneak ever peaches of his schoolfellows."

It was at this juncture that the bell rang for tea, and between then and bed time Hugh noticed the whispered consultations and private arrangements, which we alluded to before.

It was perfectly true that a rule had been made by Mr Everard some two years ago, promising expulsion to any who should break bounds at night. This had been owing to a discovery of much that was wrong, which had taken place for some time, unknown to the masters. The principal offender had, however, left shortly after; and though Sanderson had taken part in that affair also, it had never been suspected.

The rules of the school had been printed and framed, and were hung up in the schoolroom, but partly because they were very generally known, and partly that Mr Everard was under the happy delusion that all his boys were trustworthy, the nail on which the frame of rules hung had been made to do double duty, and at present there was a large map hanging over it, which had been put there temporarily at first, and never removed.

Mr Everard had mentioned these rules to the Camerons on their first coming, and advised them to make acquaintance with them. I believe Hugh did begin reading them one day, but having heard most of

them already from his schoolfellows, and his attention being attracted by something more interesting, he ran off and never reverted to them again ; so that he was actually ignorant of the most important rule of all.

But Frank had been told of the previous breach of discipline by Sanderson, as something very grand, at which he had assisted, and also of the discovery, and Mr Everard's anger, and though he determined to go through anything, sooner than be thought a coward, his heart misgave him, and he secretly wished he could back out of it.

On the note which Jack passed him was scribbled, " Let us get into one bed to-night, after the light is out."

They had previously arranged that they should watch their chance and slip out by the front-door ; the fact of Mr Everard's being out, leaving the coast clear, as the servants' offices were at the other end of the house.

The windows in all the boys' rooms had been barred since they had been found to have broken bounds ; and it was the custom of the under master to walk through each dormitory a little after nine o'clock, to see all in bed, and that the lights were out.

Since Mr Dupuis' indisposition this duty had been performed by Jenkins, a very strict and rather disagreeable old woman, who was wardrobe keeper, and never disposed to give the boys much indulgence.

Indeed, she had to put up with so much impudence and teasing from them, that it was no wonder that she looked upon them as her natural enemies.

"Better look sharp," said Sanderson, winking at the same time to Frank. "Old Jenny isn't in the best of tempers, and won't give us any grace."

They had all been dawdling rather hitherto, and Jack and Frank had not as yet taken off their clothes.

Jack was busy fastening up some greatcoats against the window blind, which he attached by means of pins and pocket-knives.

"There's such a row with the market people and the fair, that we shan't get to sleep with so much light in the room," he explained.

The others laughed. "You're getting nervous and ladylike, Jack ; if you're going into the army, as you say, you won't be able to indulge in such fancies."

But they didn't stop to take them down, and hearing Jenkins' step approaching, Sanderson said—

"Here she comes, and we not undressed. Pop on your nightshirt over your clothes, and get into bed, Frank. I'll do the same."

Frank pretended to be very much afraid of being caught, and leapt into bed, merely first kicking off his boots.

Sanderson threw on his nightshirt and accosted the old woman as she came in.

"My dear Jenkins, how stunning you look to-night ! Why, any one would take you for five-and-twenty with that cap on !"

"Get to bed, do, Mr Sanderson," she replied sharply, "and learn to speak respectful to your elders."

"Ah, but I must have a kiss first," he said. "My pretty Jane, my dearest Jane, oh! never look so shy; if you will come in to take away our lights, you must pay the penalty."

And he rushed at her and seized her round the neck, at the same time, apparently accidentally, knocking over the candlestick and extinguishing the light.

Old Jenkins was very angry.

"You're too bad, upon my word, sir. If Mr Everard were only in, I'd go straight to him, that I would,—and what have you done to the room to make it so pitch dark, too? How am I to find my way out, I should like to know?"

Jack pretended to be sorry. "Well 'twas too bad, Jenny, I allow, but 'twas quite by accident. Here, I'll guide you out, where's your hand?" he said, feeling and fumbling about her dress.

"Law, Master Sanderson, that's my skirt you've got hold of. Lead me to the door, do, for I don't know my way about as you do."

Jack politely conducted her there, and having mollified her by an apology and a compliment on her good nature, returned to the room.

"You've left the door open, Sanderson," said Rogers.

"All the better; it's hot to-night." Then he crossed over to Frank's bed, and got in, dressed as he was.

He feigned a long yawn. "Good night, chaps, I'm awfully sleepy," he said, and there was silence amongst them.

At least they were apparently silent, but he and Frank, with their heads buried deep under the bed-clothes, were making final arrangements in broken whispers.

"We've no time to lose," said Jack. "We shan't have two hours now. If they don't sleep in five minutes we must creep out. Carry your boots and hat in your hand."

Hugh seemed never going to sleep to-night. His mind was full of his brother's intimacy with Sanderson, and the racket in the town, and the distant sound of drums and pistol galleries from the shows which were stationed in an adjacent field, helped to keep him awake.

Presently he said : "Are you asleep, Frank ?"

"No," he answered. "I've been too lazy to take off my clothes. I must get up and do it, it is so precious hot."

Then Jack whispered to him, "Now's our time. Creep out after me when you're ready."

And after they had slipped off their nightshirts and picked up their boots and hats, Sanderson said, making the bed creak as he spoke :

"He's in again. Now, Cameron, don't talk any more, there's a good fellow. I *am* so sleepy."

And gripping Frank's arm, they stole from the darkened room.

"All right then, God bless you, old fellow," said Hugh, and he felt surprised and hurt that his brother made no reply.



## CHAPTER IX.

### IN THE THICK OF IT.

FRANK'S heart beat fast, and he looked pale enough when he found himself outside the front door.

"Oh, Sanderson," he said, as Jack shut it quietly after him, "how are we ever to get in again? You never thought of that."

"Didn't I, you young soft, see here!" and he held up a latch key. "I fished it out of the old woman's pocket when I was scuffling with her."

Frank looked up to Jack with greater admiration than ever, and thought him the cleverest boy he ever met.

He forgot that the devil always helps us to do wrong; it is easy to everybody to be clever that way.

The two boys hurried quickly through that part of the town where the lights were brightest, with their caps well over their eyes, and made as fast as they could to the field where the shows were erected.

There was a great crowd of dirty, rough-looking people pushing into the field. The theatre seemed to attract them most. A red-nosed gentleman in black velvet breeches covered with spangles, was trying hard to persuade the people to enter; and a weary, saucy-



“‘Come along in,’ said Jack, ‘this will be the best of the lot.’”

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looking girl, in a low dress with very short skirts, was playing a tambourine, and dancing on the platform outside.

Frank thought it a pity she had not washed her stockings before the performance began ; but I think she was too tired to care if they were dirty or not, for she never danced more than two or three steps at a time, and then leant against the walls of the theatre, whilst the man in black velvet took up his part.

"Come along in," said Jack, "this will be the best of the lot."

So, with a great deal of shoving and squeezing, they at length got in, but the performance was partly over before they did so, and the crowd of people in front of them prevented their seeing much of what was going on.

After enduring great heat and a bad smell for about a quarter of an hour, the principal actor came forward and said :

"The first performance being now over, the haudience is requested to pass out by the left-'and door. We shall now give an entirely new piece, never yet put on any stage. All as is desirous of attending is requested to re-enter at the right-'and door—admission tuppence."

"A very short play that," said Jack ; "but I suppose we can't expect more for the money. Let's go now and see the fat boy."

There was a picture of this interesting young gentleman outside his dwelling, which represented him as so big, that he covered one entire side of the caravan. He

wore a low dress made like a baby's, and tied up at the shoulder with ribbons, and he appeared to be so very fat that his flesh lay in great rolls, one on the top of the other.

"How can he move about inside, if he's as big as all that?" thought Frank; but he followed closely on Jack's heels, and the place was smaller and even stuffier than the theatre had been.

The fat boy was not so very big after all, but was a disgusting-looking, heavy young man, with two or three chins, and flabby, pendulous cheeks.

"They've not put on his baby's dress," said Frank.

"You young muff! You don't suppose those pictures outside are to be trusted! When you're older you'll learn that people tell lies in this world."

Frank might easily have learnt this already from his intimacy with Jack Sanderson. The fat boy walked round amongst the people and collected money from them in a greasy hat, and begged them all to feel that his flesh was genuine.

As Frank had no coppers left, he was obliged to give a shilling, so that his money was getting rather short by this time. They tried their luck at shooting in the pistol gallery, but though they both felt sure they had hit the mark several times, the man declared each time that they had missed, so that they did not get any nuts.

The show that most pleased Frank was one of dancing dogs. Signor Frederico, who spoke with a strong Irish accent, exhibited them. There was one

dressed as a milkman. He wore a blouse, and carried a yoke over his poor little sloping shoulders, with milk cans attached to it; and he walked on his hind legs up and down the front of the show to attract the spectators. He turned every time he came to the end of the platform, and retraced his steps so gravely, that it would have been amusing, had it not been so pitiful. Whenever his master went inside for a minute, the dog sat down on his haunches, but was up again like lightning on the man's re-appearance.

"Ah! ye would, would ye!" said Signor Frederico, fixing his eye on the poor milkman, who laid down his ears, and licked his lips nervously, and tucked his tail so close out of sight that he might have been a real milkman as far as that went.

There was another dog dressed as a lady in a very wide crinoline, who shewed her legs in a most unlady like manner, and who took the milkman's arm and came round for pence. It seemed the same in all these shows, you had to pay to go in, and to pay to get out again also.

They had pretty well seen all now. All Frank's money was gone too, so after examining the picture of the pig with six legs, who was represented as dancing on the two hind ones, and holding out the other four to the beholders; and taking a parting look at the young lady in dirty stockings, who was still alternately dancing and panting, they turned to leave the field.

"What's the time, Jack," said Frank, "it must be going on for eleven."

Sanderson felt for his watch in vain. The cross bar of his chain was in his waistcoat buttonhole, but the chain had been snipped just below by pliers, and he and his watch were parted for ever.

He began to swear angrily, for they had heard plenty of oaths amongst the crowds to-night, and the words came fast enough to him.

But they had heard the clock strike ten some time ago, and felt they had no time to spare, even if staying to look for the watch would have done any good; so Sanderson, very much out of temper with Frank and everybody else, and poor Frank, thinking that fairs were not half so amusing as he had fancied, began to bend their steps homewards.

"I wouldn't have lost that watch for five pounds," Jack grumbled. "I broke the first that was given me, and when father replaced it, he said it should be the last I should get from him. It's all Everard's fault; if he had let us go in broad daylight, this wouldn't have happened."

"What a pity it was you wore it," said Frank, sorrowfully.

"What's the good of saying that, as I *did* wear it, you young muff! Thank goodness, there's only one week to the holidays, for if Everard were to notice and enquire about it, I might get into a row. The latch key is all safe at anyrate, that's a comfort."

They had arrived at home by this time, and they stole guiltily up the long stone passage leading to the

front door. Then Jack bent down his ear to the key-hole to listen if anyone should be in the hall.

"All's quiet," he said, and slipped the key into its place.

What a long time it seemed before that key would do its work! Jack was so anxious to avoid noise, and unused to this latch-key, that he fumbled and got it in crooked, and had to take it out again several times, without having effected his purpose.

Frank's anxiety was great. The excitement was over, and his spirits dashed by the disappointments of the evening, and he stood behind Jack trembling and squeezing his hands tightly together to keep from crying. I think he was a little bit afraid of Mr Everard after all!

At length the latch-key was tired, I suppose, of being obstinate, and with rather a sharp click, which sounded terribly loud to the boys, set the door open.

The gas was turned down low in the hall against Mr Everard's return. Evidently the servants were not sitting up for him, so slipping off their boots, the boys proceeded to steal upstairs.

Of course each stair creaked and groaned as it never did at any other time, but at last they were all mounted, and Jack and Frank sped quickly and safely down the long uncarpeted passage which led to their dormitory.

The door was still open, and they could hear the steady regular breathing of the sleeping boys. Some of the coats which Jack had hung up, appeared to have

fallen down from the window, but they were too glad to find themselves safely back again to notice anything, and they threw off their clothes and got quickly into bed.

Frank, over excited and dissatisfied with himself, lay long awake ; the prickings of his conscience, and the confused remembrance of the rabble he had been mixing with, took alternate places in his mind.

How long it seemed since they had left the house ! yet it was barely two hours, for there was the town clock striking eleven now.

" Well, it shall be the first and the last time," thought Frank. " As it is, it has done no harm to any one, except losing poor Jack his watch ; but it was very little fun after all to what I expected."

Then he resolutely shut his eyes, and tried to shut out thought at the same time. And as he did so, the words he had been used to say nightly but a short while back, from the force of habit, came back to him again.

" I will lay me down in peace and sleep, for Thou, Lord, only makest me to dwell in safety."

And though the room was dark, and there were none to hear or see, the consciousness of God's eternal Presence and his own sinfulness, made Frank bury his head in the bedclothing, to hide his burning face.

" Oh ! what a hypocrite I am," he thought ; " to say those words now ! " and he lay unhappy and remorseful, until the sound of coming wheels warned him of Mr Everard's return.



## CHAPTER X.

### CAUGHT.

HUGH lay uneasy and wakeful for another half hour, and attributing it partly to the heat of the room, got up and began to unfasten the coats with which Sanderson had been at such pains to darken the window.'

He stood for a while watching the people who were standing about gossiping and buying at the stalls, but he was tired and sleepy, and soon left the window, passing over to Frank's bed to look at him for a minute before returning to his own. All his sleepiness was gone in a minute! Frank's empty bed, and as he glanced involuntarily at Sanderson's, his vacant place also, told the whole truth to Hugh in a minute. Their long conference in the playground, their secret whisperings, all the little by-play which had gone on between them during the past day, came back to him at once. He even remembered the darkening of the window, and the artfulness of their feigning to undress, and with a groan of misery, he guessed at once where they were gone. He began to reproach himself for his want of observation.

"What a fool I was not to see it before!" he thought ;  
"anyone with their wits about them would have guessed



what they were up to." His next impulse was to follow them. "They can't have been gone long; perhaps after all they are only at the stalls outside. I dare not leave Frank alone with Sanderson. I believe he would lead him into any sort of mischief." And acting on the spur of the moment, too excited to judge if it was right or wrong, having only in his mind the rescuing of Frank from the evil example of Sanderson, he dressed and hurried down stairs to follow his brother.

Of course he found the door unlocked, and he ran quickly up the street, to the square in front of the market-place, and looked eagerly amongst the knots of people assembled round the stalls.

Nothing could he see of Frank or Jack, so with a heavy heart he proceeded to the field in hopes of finding and persuading them to return at once.

The rabble was at its thickest there now. It was past ten o'clock, and the police were imperative in having all the shows closed by eleven, so the people were making the most of the remaining time. Poor Hugh, excited and bewildered, squeezed himself wherever he could manage to do so, but of course he stood but a bad chance in a crowd of mostly grown-up people, and though doubtless they must have been on the ground at the same time, the boys did not happen to encounter one another.

Most probably Jack and Frank were in one or other of the shows during Hugh's search, into which, having no money in his pocket, he could not enter.

He must have stayed there almost an hour, going over the same ground again and again fruitlessly.

Presently the people began to turn out from the shows and to leave the ground. Still there were no signs of Sanderson and Frank, and the place being now comparatively deserted, and the exhibitions beginning to be pulled to pieces, Hugh followed the example of others and turned homewards also.

He began to hope that he had jumped too hastily to conclusions, and been frightening himself for nothing. Frank surely would never do anything really wrong. They must have left their beds for fun, to alarm him possibly, or perhaps they were watching the townspeople from one of the lower windows of the school-house.

But though he tried to persuade himself of this, he was still very uneasy at heart, and walked sadly back, forgetful of his own breach of discipline, forgetful of Mr Everard, and indeed of every one but Frank, forgetful also, until he reached the door, that he had no means of re-entering the house.

He stood for a minute thinking, wondering how he could get in, and what would be the consequence should it be discovered that he had left the house, but no ideas came to his assistance. If he climbed the wall and got into the playground, there was no unbarred window that side that he could avail himself of. He dared not ring and be let in. Must he pass the night out of doors?

Whilst he was pondering, he mechanically took hold of the handle of the door and shook it gently in so doing. It was a very slight noise, but it and the foot-steps outside were heard by some one in the hall at the time, and suspecting that some of the fair people, up to no good at that time of night, might be loitering about the place, the person opened the door suddenly, and Hugh confronted Mr Everard face to face.

He had returned from his dinner-party but two or three minutes before, and was just about to lock up and put out the gas, when the slight noise made by Hugh arrested him.

They looked at one another for half a minute without speaking. I am sure Mr Everard would much sooner have faced the roughest and most dangerous of burglars than the frightened, trembling boy who stood before him.

Mr Everard took him by the shoulder and led him under the gasalier.

"Cameron!" he said, in such a tone as Hugh had never heard him use, "is it possible? I thought it was Frank at first, but *you*, Hugh Cameron, whom I have thought so well of!" and he turned from the boy with as much pain as anger in his face.

Hugh did not speak; indeed, he did not know what to say. He could not excuse himself without involving others, and he felt almost too miserable to trust his voice.

"Where have you been, sir? Answer me at once."

"I only went to look if—I didn't go for anything wrong, indeed, sir," stammered out Hugh.

Mr Everard looked at him severely.

"You have been to the fair and the shows, I conclude?" he asked.

Hugh was beginning to speak again, when his master stopped him.

"Don't make matters worse by prevarications, Cameron. I am too astonished and hurt by what I have discovered to speak to you to-night. You can go."

And poor Hugh, with a burning face, and more unhappy at being suspected of untruthfulness, and at his dear Mr Everard's bad opinion of him, than he had ever been in his life, sorrowfully obeyed him.

Mr Everard remained standing in the hall after Hugh left him, with his hand resting on the old oak table, and his eyes looking apparently at nothing, thinking deeply of what had transpired.

If any one of the boys had so transgressed it would have grieved him very much, but for Hugh! whom he had so lately praised for his ingenuous, honourable character, and of whom he had grown so fond, to be proved so deceitful, was indeed a painful revelation.

"I must be a poor judge of character, after all," he thought, "for yesterday I would have staked anything on that boy's probity."

Then he gave a great sigh, and lighting his candle, walked away to bed.

When Hugh reached the dormitory, he found Frank sitting up in bed and looking very frightened.

"What is it, Hugh? Where have you been? Has Mr Everard found out anything?"

"He has found out that I've broken bounds, that's all," said Hugh, bitterly. "Where have you been yourself, Frank? I went to look for you."

"When did you go? I didn't miss you before," answered Frank, evading his question.

"You couldn't very well do that, as you weren't here, at any rate, when I left. I saw your and Sanderson's beds empty, and I was afraid you had gone to the fair, and followed you. Oh, I wish I had never, never gone," he said, sitting on the side of his bed and crying sadly.

The noise woke up Sanderson and some of the others.

"What's it all about?" said Jack. "Has young Cam. been letting out anything?"

"Hugh went to look for us, Jack, and Mr Everard caught him. Jack, we must tell all about it now."

"You'd better break your word to me," answered Sanderson, angrily; "didn't you give me your promise not to peach? You can't tell of yourself without its getting blown about me; and, according to your account, Cameron has been just as bad as we, and must take chances, as we all must."

Frank looked terribly frightened and unhappy.

"Where did he find you, Hugh? How did it happen? Tell us all about it."

Hugh gave him an account of it from first to last.

"And it was all for me, and only for me," said Frank, piteously. "Oh Hugh, Hugh, what shall I do if you are expelled?"

"Expelled!" his brother answered; "it will not come to that, Frank, don't fear. I shall have a good flogging, I expect, but I don't mind that; what I mind is, that I can never explain to Mr Everard."

"But don't you know the rule, Hugh? Mr Everard never breaks a rule, the boys say."

"I never heard of such a rule; I can tell him that truly—not that he is likely to believe me now, I suppose. How did you hear of that rule, Frank?"

"It's true enough," said Jack, "and all I can say is, it is a good thing for you if you didn't know it; for you may possibly get off that way. As to me and Frank, we were both quite aware of it. So even if Frank could be so dishonourable as to break his promise, he would only make matters worse by confessing."

Frank tried hard to get Sanderson to allow him to tell of his own part in the business, leaving Jack out of the question, but he would not hear of it, and Hugh too insisted that Frank could not with honour go back from his word.

"I must take the consequences, Frank," he said, "whatever they may be. Don't distress yourself so much." And he lay down quietly, by far the happiest boy of the three, though the only one that had incurred punishment, just for this reason, that his conscience was clear of intentional wrong.

Frank was suffering greatly from remorse ; and though I am afraid Jack's conscience did not trouble him much, he was filled with a guilty dread lest the investigation of Cameron's misdemeanour should lead to the discovery of his own, or that Frank might prove unfaithful to him after all.

He turned to Hugh. "You are a brick, Cameron, after all ! You'll keep our counsel, won't you, old fellow ? Mr Everard would never let me off again, I've been in so many scrapes."

"Yes, I'll not betray you," answered Hugh, turning from him with a feeling very like disgust.

And there was again silence in the room, though three of the number had very little more sleep that night.





## CHAPTER XI.

### HUGH'S RESOLVE.

HUGH'S resolution was equally strong next morning, when he woke from a short and uneasy sleep.

"If you alone were concerned in it, Frank," he said, "I should advise you by all means to tell the whole truth ; I expect you'll have the hardest part to bear, though you may escape public punishment ; but as you agreed with Jack beforehand to keep faith with him, whatever happened, I don't think you can possibly back out of it now. Mr Everard knows how thick you two are, and would at once suspect him. I have quite made up my mind to whatever may happen, and I am not so very unhappy about it either now, for God knows I did not mean to do wrong, and that is the first thing after all, Frank."

Hugh's thoughtful grey eyes were looking straight up to the glorious blue sky above them as he spoke : he was thinking of his earthly father as well as his Heavenly One at that minute, and he was feeling "the peace which passeth all man's understanding," which never fails God's children in the troubles He sends them. He began to reap a slight reward for his unselfishness at once from the renewed affection Frank



shewed him, and the brothers walked up and down the playground, talking confidentially, with their arms round each other's necks, until the bell rang for breakfast.

Hugh felt as he imagined a criminal would when led out to execution, when after breakfast, Mr Dupuis, who was better this morning, said to him—

“Cameron, Mr Everard wants you in his study.”

Very pale, and with a beating heart, he proceeded there, and from his outward demeanour he might indeed have been as guilty as his master thought him, which shows how wrong it is to judge too much from appearances.

Hugh was of a highly sensitive nature, and it was fear for the loss of the good opinion of the master he loved so dearly, that acted upon him now. I daresay Sanderson would have been able to confront Mr Everard with much greater composure. Hugh tapped timidly at the study door—

“Come in,” said the quiet voice, and Hugh stood in the sanctum sanctorum of Mr Everard. It was a room to which the boys were never admitted except on great occasions. Hugh had spent one very happy afternoon there a short time back, when he had got a bad kick during a game of football, and been obliged to rest his leg from out-door games for a while; and Mr Everard had let him lie on the couch in the window, and read one of the books from the book-shelves which lined the walls of the little room, and afterwards he had sat in the twilight listening to Mr Everard's stories of some

of the events of his own boyhood, and Hugh had thought that if he lived to manhood, he would try to have just such a study of his own. Mr Everard's face wore a very different expression now from what it had the last time he and Hugh were together there.

He was sitting at his writing table, evidently waiting



"Come in," said the quiet voice.

for the boy, for he had no writing before him, and on Hugh's coming in, said—

"Good morning, Cameron, shut the door, and come nearer the table."

When Hugh had done so, he continued—

"I sent for you, as of course you may very well imagine, to ask if you can give me any satisfactory account of, or any excuse for, your conduct of last night."

I think Mr Everard hoped very greatly that there might be some extenuating circumstances in the case, for he took his eyes off Hugh, seeing how nervous he was, and occupied himself in playing with a little piece of pencil he held in his fingers, to give the boy time to recover himself. Hugh cleared his throat.

"No, sir," he said faintly, seeing that Mr Everard waited for an answer.

"Do you mean to tell me that you went purposely to the fair, after you had been seen safely in bed?"

"Yes, sir," he answered again.

"Were you alone, or did anyone ask you to join them?"

Mr Everard knew that he was not likely to get much information from a schoolboy as to the names of his confederates, but he was not prepared for Hugh's answer.

"I was quite alone, sir, nobody asked me."

"That is enough then," he said, presently. "You know the rules, Cameron, that you have incurred expulsion by breaking out at night?"

"I knew it from the boys last night, sir, after I came back, but I did not know it before. Indeed, indeed, I did not," he said, seeing the slight smile of incredulity on Mr Everard's face.

"You ought to have done so, then, for I myself told you to read them on your first coming. That is all I have to say to you now."

And Hugh, in ignorance of what his fate might be, returned to the school-room.

"What shall I do with the child?" thought Mr Everard, when he was again alone. "It is incomprehensible to me that he could behave so badly without some strong temptation; but if any others are involved in the affair, I should never find it out through Hugh, I am sure. It is his first offence, too; I wish I had never made that rule. It is too severe a punishment for so young a boy."

And the master's mind went back to the time when he was as thoughtless and full of fun as Hugh, and his heart yearned with a great pity over the fatherless boy in his care.

It did not tend to reassure Hugh's mind when, on the first form being called up for morning lesson, he was desired to take the lowest place in the class. Gross misconduct always involved the loss of place; and I am sorry to say that Sanderson who was second, did not feel any compunction in thus recovering his lost post, but rejoiced inwardly at the fall of his rival.

He did not do so for long, however, for, owing to the excitement of the previous afternoon, his work had been but half prepared, and he was very soon supplanted by Bourdillon.

Hugh made a terrible hash of his construing when

his turn came. He could think of nothing but his disgrace, and stumbled and stuttered, and made such a poor affair of it, that Mr Everard, pitying his distress, kindly cut his part very short, and passed on without comment.

It was a long and weary morning to the poor boy. His head throbbed from want of sleep and unhappiness, and all his tasks seemed too difficult for him. He was turned back in his English lesson, which he took with Mr Dupuis, and was just about to get an imposition from that gentleman, who had not heard of the occurrences of last night, when Mr Everard took him aside and whispered to him, and the subject was dropped.

When twelve o'clock struck, the time at which they broke off school, and generally adjourned to the playground, Mr Everard desired all the boys to remain in their places, and stood up to address them.

"Boys," said he, "you all know pretty well what I am about to say to you. I wish, with all my heart, that I had no such task. Ever since the last miserable affair of the same kind, which most of you remember taking place when Watson was amongst us, I instituted the rule, well known, I believe, amongst you all, that any boy breaking bounds at night should be expelled from this school. I deeply regret that Hugh Cameron, whom I have hitherto thought trustworthy, should have placed himself in this position; and if any of you present are conscious in your own hearts that you have had a share in this offence, or know of anything in extenuation of

his conduct, I trust that you will act like honourable boys, and come forward and acknowledge it."

He paused for a minute to see if there was any response; but though Frank paled visibly, and Sanderson twisted himself about in an uneasy manner, and tried to assume an air of unconcern, they neither of them spoke.

I think Frank's former willingness to clear his brother died away now, with the prospect of expulsion staring him in the face.

Receiving no answer from any, Mr Everard continued—

"I can hardly conceive it possible that without some bad influence, or stronger motive than mere curiosity, he should have risked so much, but of the motive of the act, God alone is judge. If any of you are keeping back what might prove some slight excuse for him, remember that though I cannot know, God does, and the day will assuredly come when all secrets shall be revealed. In the meantime I have to deal with the act itself. Cameron tells me he was unaware of the rule attending his fault; can any of you say if this is true?"

I think Hugh felt this part of Mr Everard's speech more than any other. That *his* word should go for nothing, and the others be appealed to in confirmation of it! when he prided himself so much on his strict adherence to the truth.

Frank answered eagerly—

"I'm sure he didn't know it, sir! I told him of it for the first time, after he came up last night."

Two or three of the others corroborated this, and pointed to the map which covered the printed rules, and had hung there throughout this term.

"I am very thankful," continued Mr Everard, "to hear this ; I am rejoiced also to find that Cameron did not excuse his fault by a lie. I must say for him that I have never yet found him in any untruth, therefore I

shall give him credit for what he says, and for this once, shall waive the sentence of expulsion. That there may be no such excuse in future, I shall require each boy now present, or any who may come hereafter, to write out a copy of the school rules to be pasted in his desk.



Hugh in disgrace.

"I cannot however, Cameron, pass over your fault without severe punishment, therefore I shall write to your uncle, and

inform him that from your breach of discipline, I cannot allow you to return home for the Midsummer holidays, which you must pass here, within bounds, instead."

The boys had all been standing during Mr Everard's

address; when he stopped, at his signal to them to disperse, they filed out of the room.

Poor Hugh was too miserable to follow them. It was such an unexpected punishment! so much harder to bear than the worst flogging he could imagine. To stay there alone for nearly six weeks! and what would Uncle Fred and Aunt Ethel think of him? and not to see Herbert, nor even Mumps! "'Tis the last straw that breaks the camel's back," and the recollection of Mumps' demonstrative affection was too much for Hugh, and sinking down on his seat, he laid his head on his desk, and sobbed aloud.

Mr Everard stood for a while in his place looking sorrowfully at him. If Hugh had looked up he would have seen the water in those kind eyes also. Perhaps he thought it was hardly the time to say much to the boy, so he merely laid his hand gently on his shoulder in passing him, and saying softly, "Pray to God for grace to bear your punishment cheerfully," left him alone in the room.







## CHAPTER XII.

### WHAT IT COST HIM.

HUGH did not know how long he had been sitting in the same place indulging his chagrin at his great disappointment, when the schoolroom door opened, and Frank entered.

His eyes were as red as his brother's, and he sat down by his side in silence for a few minutes. Presently he said—

“I am so miserable, Hugh. I can never enjoy my holidays without you; I shall be thinking of you all the time.”

“No, you won't after a bit,” Hugh answered. “You'll have Sanderson, you know, but I do wish with all my heart that he was not going, Frank; he does you no good by his example, and you know it as well as I do.”

“I think you are a great deal too hard upon Jack, Hugh, really I do. He's full of fun, but there's no real harm in him. After all, where's the sin in going to a fair? The mistake lies with those who keep boys in so tight.”

These were second-hand opinions of Master Jack's,

which Frank thought sounded very clear and conclusive.

"There is a great deal more than fun in him, Frank. He is not honourable or truthful, and I am sure if father were alive he is the last boy he would have wished you to make a friend of, but you are so blinded by him that you will not admit his faults. You know for one thing, he does not hesitate to tell a lie."

Frank knew it well, but he did not feel so strongly on the subject of a lie as he used to do a while back. He was slipping down hill very fast now.

So he was silent, not caring to blame his friend though he could not screen him.

"At any rate," he said after a pause, "it is too late to make any alteration now, as he has accepted the invitation, and it will be bad enough for me as it is with you left here. It isn't very kind of you, Hugh, to wish me to be quite alone, I think."

So Frank's trouble was more for himself after all, I believe, than for the brother who had to bear the punishment for his sake.

Hugh dropped the subject, for he felt it was useless to try to convince him. And by-and-bye Frank said to Sanderson—

"I am going to try and beg him off, Jack; perhaps Mr Everard might change his mind."

And though Jack did not approve of this plan entirely, having private reasons for enjoying the thought of his holidays much more without Cameron's company, Frank

seeing Mr Everard and Mr Dupuis walking together in the adjoining fields, waited till they came up, to make his request.

They were talking together of the late occurrences, and Mr Everard said.

"I don't know when I've been so troubled about the boys' peccadillos as I have been this time with young Cameron's affair. If it had been Sanderson now, I could have understood it. I have had my eye on that boy for some time, but he is a slippery fellow, and I can never catch him."

"Perhaps it may prove a happy thing for Cameron ultimately that you did discover him," answered Mr Dupuis. "There's no mistake about his having been out himself, even if others were also, so you needn't worry yourself about punishing the wrong boy."

"No! but in this individual case, I feel the punishment is too hard. I cannot make it less, however, without weakening my authority over the other boys, for, unless the penalty is very severe, the elder ones will run great risks for the sake of a night out. Young Cameron had no worse motive, I am sure, than boyish curiosity and love of adventure, to tempt him."

They were approaching Frank now, who touched his cap as they came up, and said—

"May I speak to you for a minute, please sir?"

Mr Everard stopped. "Certainly," he said; "what is it?"

"Please sir, wouldn't you—couldn't you—could you

let Hugh off this once, sir? He really didn't think of what he was doing when he went out."

"He ought to have thought, then, Frank. Did you know of his going yourself?"

"No, sir," said Frank, blushing very much as Mr Everard looked hard at him.

He began to wish he had not come to plead his brother's cause, he was so afraid lest Mr Everard's next question might be more difficult to answer, but the master only said—

"No, Frank, I cannot do it; I must keep to what I have said. It is a trouble to you, no doubt, to be parted from your brother; and I am very sorry for both you and him. You see by this, Frank, that no one can do wrong without its working harm to others as well as himself. We cannot sin and bear the consequences alone."

Frank felt this was true enough, only it applied more to him than to poor innocent Hugh; and, afraid of being cross-examined, he said no more, but rejoined Jack.

Sanderson comforted him by saying—"Depend upon it, Cameron will be all right again a day or two after we're gone. Everard is so sweet upon him, no doubt he'll give him lots more treats than we shall get; and your brother likes his company a great deal better than he does ours."

The rest of the week passed quickly away. There was great excitement, of course, amongst all the boys

at the near prospect of their emancipation ; and even Frank could not subdue his delight after his first regrets on Hugh's account had subsided.

No more was said to Hugh on the subject of his misbehaviour by Mr Everard, who had returned to his ordinary manner. The punishment being awarded, he was not one to care to increase it by continued severity, so if he had occasion to speak to Hugh, he did so kindly, though perhaps more gravely, than he had been wont. Hugh learnt that Mr Everard was himself going away the same day that school broke up ; and it was a hard matter for the boy to keep a brave heart, whilst he looked on at the active preparations of the others for departure. He felt as if he should be glad when they were fairly off, and he need no longer keep up appearances. On the last morning Mr Everard detained them for a few minutes after prayers to say " Good-bye " to each. Hugh's hopes of making his peace with him privately, died away now, as he heard him say—

" I must take leave of you now, boys, as my train leaves in a few minutes."

Then he passed down the row of boys, shaking hands cordially with each. He made no difference between any of them ; perhaps he wished to show Hugh that he felt none, and in another hour's time they were all gone, and poor Hugh left sole occupant of the great desolate, untidy school-room, and the forsaken house.

He wandered into the play-ground, but it was so strange and melancholy to see it deserted, and to find it

quiet for the first time, that he soon returned, and avoiding the school-room, took refuge in the dormitory. He could not settle himself at once to read one of the legacy of story-books the boys had left him. He had no heart to go out of doors, and could think of no congenial employment, so he curled himself up in the sunny window-sill of the bedroom, and sat thinking sadly, caressing Frank's little mouse the while.

He knew that Mr Everard had written to his uncle a few days before to apprise him of the reason of Frank's returning without his brother. He should get a letter from Uncle Fred, he supposed, shortly. It would be still more difficult to set matters straight with him than with Mr Everard, but for that he did not seem to care half so much.

"If I could only have asked him," he thought, "if he had forgiven me, it would have been so much easier to bear; but it will be too late when he returns—he will have forgotten all about it by that time."

His Bible was lying on the window-sill at his feet. He had begun to read a few verses this morning, as was his general habit, but the racket of the boys about him was so great that he had laid it aside for the time.

He took it up listlessly now, and went on reading where he had left off in the morning. It happened to be in the Second Epistle of St Peter, and he lifted up his head when he came to the verse :

"If when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God."

He had known the words well for long, but they came to him with quite a new meaning to-day, as the Bible always does when we are in trouble, and after he had closed the Book and laid it aside, he sat there long, thinking quietly of One who spent not six weeks but thirty-three years in bearing daily the punishment of others; and the remembrance that he was now sharing in his little way the Cross of the dear Saviour of us all, calmed and comforted him as no earthly friend could have done.

And though he was a solitary prisoner in the now dreary old school-house, he was more light of heart and happier that evening than his brother Frank, who having reached home with Sanderson, was listening with a burning face to his uncle's animadversions on Hugh's bad conduct, and praising him for not being mixed up with it.





## CHAPTER XIII.

JIM.

BEFORE leaving home Mr Everard said to Mr Dupuis—

“Would it inconvenience you much if I ask you to stay on here for a few days longer? If you are not engaged to go anywhere at once, it would be a great accommodation to me, as I promised some time back to run up to London as soon as the holidays began, and I do not think I could leave Cameron alone with the servants.”

Mr Dupuis answered readily—

“Oh, no, I will gladly do as you wish, but how about your tour in Scotland?”

“That I must give up, of course,” answered Mr Everard, “but I should not like to disappoint my mother, who is now expecting me. If you can spare until Friday, I will be back on that day, and you can prolong your holidays at the other end.”

It had been arranged by Mr Everard that he should take a walking tour through part of Scotland this summer, so Hugh's punishment cost him something too, although one of the boys had said thoughtlessly, thinking, as most schoolboys do, that the masters have a very easy time of it—



"It's all very well for Everard, who can take a holiday whenever he likes. He'd better try how he'd enjoy it himself."

Mr Dupuis replied—

"I am very sorry that you should lose your tour. I will remain here longer if you would like it; let me take a fortnight of the time?"

But Mr Everard would not hear of this.

"I could not enjoy myself," he said, "at the expense of others. Never mind about me, I shall find plenty of ways of amusing myself."

It was Monday when they were talking, and next day was the breaking up of school, so that in reality Mr Everard was only going for two clear days; but of that Hugh had no idea.

He was rather surprised to see Mr Dupuis, when told by Lucy, the maid, that tea was ready.

Lucy had been looking for him all over the place, and now she put her arms round his neck and give him a motherly kiss.

"Don't'ee fret any more," she said, "the time'll soon pass away, and we shall be looking for them back again soon;" and she took from her pockets some enormous apples, a substantial form of consolation which Hugh accepted with pleasure.

Mr Dupuis was not such pleasant company as Mr Everard; he was a studious man, and took his tea reading a book all the while. He looked so funny, peering with his weak eyes through his spectacles at

the volume he held in one hand, with his cup raised in the other, and with a huge piece of toast in his mouth, for to save time he took enormous bites without looking what he was doing, that Hugh would have liked very much to laugh, if he had had anyone to share the joke with him.

Tea was soon over, the master being anxious to get back to his studies, and Hugh not feeling hungry; then Mr Dupuis, seeming to remember the boy for the first time, said to him—

“You can go anywhere about the grounds, Cameron, or in the house, but you must not go out of bounds during Mr Everard’s absence, and you may read any books in the study, as long as you don’t take them out of the room.”

Then feeling that he had done his duty as far as Hugh was concerned, he settled himself comfortably to his book, oblivious of a spoonful of egg he had dropped on his necktie, and a few crumbs hanging in one whisker.

Hugh thanked him, and felt it was kind of Mr Everard to have left this permission behind him, but he began to wonder if Mr Dupuis were to remain as his companion all the holidays, and rather to hope that he would not.

He saw very little of him during the next two days, excepting at meal times, as he whiled away the time, partly by strolling about the garden, with a book and the dog, and partly in the little room belonging to

Mrs Jenkins, where that old lady was generally to be found surrounded by clothes requiring repair. On the Friday afternoon, Hugh got rid of some of his heavy hours by helping the gardener who was busy with the lawn. The boys did not in general frequent the garden much, the playground being more suitable for their games, but now Hugh was glad to take his turn in mowing and rolling, and Giles the gardener was not at all disinclined to avail himself of his help. Hugh had been going backwards and forwards with the lawn cutter many times, and was still hard at work, with the perspiration running down his face, when he noticed Giles' son, a lad of about his own age, watching him. He was a cripple, this poor boy, from his birth, and as Hugh came near him, he nodded good-naturedly to the poor fellow, and said—

"I'm pretty well done up, Jim, I must come and rest a bit with you."

Jim made room for him on the garden-roller, where he was sitting basking in the sun, and they entered into conversation.

"What do you do all day, Jim," said Hugh, "when you can't go out with your father?"

"I stuff birds mostly," he answered, "and such like things. I wish I could do something that paid better though—no one about seems to care about having their pets stuffed."

Which indeed was no wonder, for the ghastly elongated specimens of birds and animals that poor



"So Jim produced the mole, and lesson number one began."

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Jim turned out of hand were so unlike the originals, that they were not generally recognized by their late owners.

"I should like to learn to stuff birds," said Hugh.  
"Who taught you, Jim?"

"A man who set up here for a bit, but he's left now. I could teach you, sir, if you'd like to learn. I've got some tools with me, and a dead mole in my pocket now."

"All right, Jim, but if you give me lessons I shall pay you for them. I'll give you sixpence a lesson until I know all about it."

So Jim, who thought this a munificent arrangement, produced the mole, and lesson number one begun.

The mole having been dead several days, and neither master nor pupil being very expert at their work, the skin was pretty well torn before it was separated from the little animal. Jim promised to bring some preparation with which to soften and prepare the skin to-morrow; and in the meantime it was hung in the sun to dry.

In taking out the sixpence which was deep in the recesses of one of Hugh's pockets, and hard to come at, Hugh pulled out and dropped on the ground a leaf torn from a theme book, which had been used to wrap something in. Jim picked it up, and after looking at it with great interest, said—

"You didn't never do this beautiful writing yourself, sir?"

"Do you call that beautiful, Jim? It's nothing out of the common."

"It looks beautiful to me," sighed the boy, "I'd give a deal to write any way. Father can't pay for schooling for me, as I've never been anything but a burden to him, and never shan't be otherwise."

He looked so downcast about it that Hugh said—

"If Mr Dupuis will let me, Jim, I'd teach you to write during these holidays. Would you like it? Shall I ask him?"

Jim flushed with pleasure.

"Would I like it?" he echoed, "it's what I've been longing for a length of time."

So it was arranged between them that, if permitted, the lessons should begin to-morrow; and as Jim limped painfully away to his poor home, taking the leaf of writing with him, as something too precious to be thrown away, Hugh felt glad and thankful that his sacrifice might at any rate be of good to the poor crippled boy.

It wanted still an hour to tea-time, and Hugh being left alone now, and feeling tired of hard work, leant on the fence which divided the garden from the playground, and pondered on what he could do with the evening before him.

He and the gardener between them had got the turf into such first-rate order that he heard no footsteps behind him, and was quite unaware of the approach of anyone, till feeling two hands laid on his shoulders he

turned round suddenly, to find to his great surprise Mr Everard standing and looking down into his face.

Hugh's astonishment was so great that he only stared at him for a minute without speaking ; and he looked such an untidy, dirty object from the combined effects of gardening and mole skinning, that Mr Everard could not help laughing, as he said, "Well, Cameron, I didn't mean to startle you so. Are you very sorry to see me back again?"

"Sorry, sir? no indeed, I am very glad," Hugh answered earnestly ; "but I thought you were in Scotland, and I was so surprised."

"No, I am not going to Scotland just at present. I only returned from London by the last train, and came out to admire the beautiful order into which Giles has got the garden. Can you tell me where Mr Dupuis is?"

"He is in the library, I think, sir ; shall I go and fetch him?"

"I will go there to him," answered Mr Everard, and turned away in the direction of the house.

Hugh felt that now or never was his time ; most probably Mr Everard would leave home again shortly, and, having gained courage by the unlooked for way in which they had met, and the kindly manner of his master, he ran after him, and speaking very fast and rather indistinctly, for he was nervous, said, "Mr Everard—sir, will you tell me first if—if you have forgiven me yet for—for—what I did?"



He took refuge in this form of speech, not exactly knowing under what head to class his misdemeanour.

Mr Everard bent his tall figure a little to catch what Hugh said, but he heard it however ; perhaps he had expected something of the kind.

"Yes, indeed, Cameron," he answered ; "I have forgiven you long ago. You must not measure my anger by your punishment. I can assure you it was no pleasure to me to deprive you of your holidays ?"

"Thank you, sir, very much," Hugh answered, giving a sigh of relief, and half his burden seemed lifted off his shoulders at once. "I was so afraid you might leave home again still angry with me," he added.

"I shall not leave home again," Mr Everard replied.

"Not go to Scotland, sir ? Not have your own holiday ?" said Hugh. "Oh, Mr Everard, you have not lost it through me, have you ? Indeed, sir, you may trust me ; I will promise you most sacredly not to break bounds."

"It is not that I mistrust you, Cameron ; I do not remain at home to watch you. I have arranged matters more to my own satisfaction by staying at home this summer ; so think no more of it, and we will see whether we can amuse one another for a little while."

Then he passed his arm affectionately round the boy's neck, and they walked together to the house.

Hugh's heart was too full to let him speak, but his love for Mr Everard took deeper root than ever.



## CHAPTER XIV.

### RICHMOND.

FRANK and Sanderson had but a short time to pass in London, as Mr Manners and his family only waited for their arrival to move into the country for the summer months. They had a pretty little house on the banks of the Thames but a short distance from Richmond. The garden sloped to the water's edge, and here was a boat-house, and a light boat in which they spent many hours.

Frank looked and felt very sheepish on returning, and drew down Sanderson's angry expostulations when they were alone.

"If you're such an ass, Cam, you'll be letting all out before you've got through the holidays. Why, your eyes were as full of water as a girl's, last, night when your uncle was speaking. You're not half the man I took you for."

Sanderson was so often overbearing in his manner to Frank, and Frank, having a conscience ill at ease, was so touchy at what he said, that they spent a good part of their time in quarrelling.

"I don't know what sort of a man you call yourself,

Jack," Frank retorted. "I think we are a couple of sneaks, and if it wasn't for my promise, I'd tell all my share of it at once."

"Hold your tongue and shut up, do," whispered Sanderson, "here's your uncle bearing down upon us," and as he spoke he pushed into his pocket a clay pipe which he often tried to smoke, though it invariably made him feel sick afterwards.

Uncle Fred had cross-questioned Frank rather uncomfortably on his first return, in the presence of Aunt Ethel, and Frank felt the quiet steady glance of her blue eyes, far more than the glare of his uncle's spectacled ones.

"It is a bad business this of Hugh's, Frank," Uncle Fred had said, "tell me the whole story of it. I learnt the fact only from Mr Everard, now I want the particulars."

"He—he—broke bounds, uncle, and went out without leave, that was it," stammered Frank.

"Yes, yes, I know that, but what for, and who with?"

Frank paused for a minute, for he wasn't bad enough as yet to tell a downright lie without compunction, but finding no way out of it, he said—

"I don't know exactly, I suppose it was to see the fair."

"And had you been forbidden to go there?"

"Yes, uncle."

"And did any other boys go too?"

"No, uncle." It came out easier this time, though Frank's cheeks were burning hot.

"And do you mean to say that Hugh has made no confession even to you, as to why he went, and that you are in the dark about it?"

As Frank hesitated, Uncle Fred continued—

"If he has told you, Frank, you had better let me know. Mr Everard says he can learn nothing of Hugh's motives from himself. If it should involve any of the other boys, you may be sure I would not take advantage of your confidence, but I ought to know the truth for Hugh's sake."

They were getting on such dangerous ground that Sanderson put in—

"Oh no, sir, nothing of that kind. Cameron went out quite alone, and came in quite alone, as everyone knows."

Uncle Manners put Sanderson quietly down by simply holding up his hand, and saying—"Hold your tongue, please," and turning again to Frank for an answer. Frank had no resource but lie number two, so he tried to look unconcerned, and sniffed and answered, with his natural colour this time—

"No, I don't know anything about it, uncle, and it's no use asking me any more."

Mr Manners was in the habit of speaking the truth himself, consequently he believed Frank's statements, and imagined that his confusion arose from regret for his brother, so he replied—

"I'm very sorry for it, very sorry indeed. I am thankful, however, that Hugh did not lead you into the same mischief. Hitherto I have felt such confidence in him that I have been glad to think you had so good a counsellor to turn to as your brother. I shall not be able to feel the same in future; but I sincerely trust that you will take warning by this, Frank, and not allow yourself to be led into wrong-doing, and try to keep him as steady as yourself. I am very glad, my boy, that you at least have come back, after your first term, with a good name."

And Uncle Fred had shaken hands very heartily with Frank, and dropped the subject. And Frank, who had been on thorns for some time, took care not to renew it.

It was when they were down in the country that Aunt Ethel said to Mr Manners—

"I don't admire that boy Sanderson that Frank has brought home. If he'd be content to be a boy, he would be much pleasanter, but the grown-up airs he puts on are so ridiculous."

"Yes, he is not a very taking boy, certainly, but Frank tells me he is the head boy at school, so I suppose he is better than he looks. He smelt very strong of tobacco to-day. He'd better not let me catch him smoking or teaching Frank to do so."

Then Uncle Fred walked away and encountered the boys in the garden, just as Master Jack had hidden his pipe, as we saw a little while since.

As soon as he was gone Sanderson remarked—

"If the old party is going to be poking his nose in and out of the place all the morning, I vote we make off somewhere. What shall we do, Frank? it's uncommonly slow here. Shall we pull down to Richmond?"

"We can't take the boat without asking leave," said Frank; "but I'll go and ask Aunt Ethel, if you like."

"Whew!" answered Sanderson. "What! are you tied by the leg so tight as that?"

"We are not tied at all," said Frank, hotly. "There's no one gives boys more rein than uncle; but Aunt Ethel might want to have a row herself, and I shan't go without first asking."

"Go on and ask, then, and make haste back, for it's frightfully hot here."

And he amused himself during Frank's absence in worrying a cockatoo, who was placed on his stand in the sun. He was a very well-disposed bird in general, and would take anything to eat from the hand, but Jack offered it a gooseberry so many times, and then drew it away just as the bird thought he was going to have it, that partly through anger and partly through eagerness to secure the fruit, Cocky hooked his beak right through the gooseberry into Jack's forefinger. He gave a cry of pain and aimed a blow at the bird simultaneously, but he ducked so cleverly, and looked so savage with his erected crest and flapping wings, that Jack thought better of it, and walked off, grumbling and sucking his injured finger, in a very bad temper.

Aunt Ethel, who was talking to Frank at the drawing-

room window, saw what passed, but she made no remark, and presently Frank came back with leave to have the boat ; so loosing her from the boat-house, they were soon rowing gently down the stream.

They were not very good oars, either of them, but it



Jack and Cockatoo.

was too hot to care to exert themselves much, so they went lazily on, going partly with the current.

Jack laid back and pretended to smoke, taking an occasional puff, and trying to fancy he liked it; and Frank sat at the tiller eating gooseberries and

throwing the skins to the swans who followed them, in hopes of something better.

It was a pleasant way of passing an idle summer's day—the boughs of the trees which grew on the fresh

green banks on either side the river, drooping over and hanging so low that you had to look out for your head sometimes, if you kept inland for the sake of the shade.

There were plenty of pleasure-boats with their bright awnings, and pic-nic parties inside, on all sides, and moored here and there in the quieter nooks were steady old punts, with equally steady-looking old occupants, who were so bent on their sport that they wished the livelier pleasure-seekers anywhere.

Frank and Jack came upon such a punt now, but the angler seemed more absorbed in his book than his fishing.

“Do you see who that is, Jack?” said Frank as they approached him.

“Why, it’s old Dupuis, as sure as my name’s Jack!” he answered. “Don’t make a noise, Cam; he sees no more than an owl by daylight. Let’s pass him by; we’ve enough of him in school time.”

Everybody over boyhood was “old” so-and-so with Sanderson, so no wonder he thought himself almost a man.

It was Mr Dupuis, certainly. Who else would have let that cunning little trout nibble off the bait and leave the hook behind; but it was all one to Mr Dupuis. His rod was hanging half in the water, the line entangled with weeds, and the fish, discerning how inoffensive a foe they had to contend with, were leaping about all round him, whilst he was deep in the



delights of some ancient Greek poem that was more to him than the finest fish the Thames could boast.

If he got no fish by his craft, he got what he valued much more, peace and uninterrupted quiet from his talkative fellow creatures.

He never looked up as the boys passed by, tittering and remarking in low tones on his personal appearance.

"Look at his hat at the back of his head, and look at his gig-lamps," said Jack. "Why don't the fellow learn he can't do two things at once?"

Jack had not learnt it himself, apparently, for in continuing to row without minding his oars, whilst he was looking over his shoulder at Mr Dupuis, he missed his stroke, and fell backwards with his heels in the air, "catching a crab," and splashing so much water at the same time, that Frank roared with laughter, and even their absent-minded master looked up.

"Ha! ho!" he said; "bless my heart, Sanderson and Cameron! Why, are you staying in this neighbourhood? So am I."

Frank explained, as Sanderson, feeling his dignity wounded, was inclined to be sulky, and Mr Dupuis, with a hasty nod of "good-bye," returned to his interrupted studies.

"I wish he hadn't recognised us," said Jack. "He's sharp enough when he isn't reading; one can't have any fun always pursued by masters."



## CHAPTER XV.

### BREWING MISCHIEF.

THEY were nearing Richmond Bridge now, and Frank proposed that they should land and go into the town for a spree.

The town was full of bustle and excitement; stands were erected in the gardens of the various hotels that faced the river, for the use of spectators at the coming regatta.

Bills about the regatta were posted everywhere; the shop windows were full of rosettes and ribbons for the opposition sides, and flags and decorations of all kinds were disposed about the streets.

The boys had been into Richmond before, so they knew their way about, and having eaten an unlimited number of "maids of honour," and drank several bottles of ginger beer, felt hotter and more uncomfortable than ever.

"Here, let's toss who pays, Cam," said Sanderson. "Heads win; heads it is," he added, tossing and pocketing his coin so quickly that none but himself saw it.

The young woman behind the counter took Frank's half-crown, and snapped out twopence change in such a

rapid manner that he was still looking at her in astonishment when he found business was concluded, and they left the shop.

"How disgusting that ginger beer was. I'm thirstier than ever, Frank. Let's go and have some beer somewhere."

"I'm not thirsty," answered Frank, "but I feel as if I couldn't walk another step; wait till I unbutton my waistcoat, Jack; how hot the sun is to be sure; but if you want more you must pay for yourself, for I've nothing but this twopence left now."

"I've nothing but the halfpenny I tossed. 'Twas a good job for me that I won," he answered. "We must go to some quiet inn; these swag places charge such a lot."

So they turned down a narrow bye-street and into a little inn, outside which a knot of men were standing.

They were jockey-looking sort of men mostly, and they were talking of horses, and of one in particular that was to be raced to-morrow. Sanderson edged his way in amongst them, and Frank followed close behind.

The place was very hot and nasty inside, and smelt sour from stale beer and tobacco; the sun glared in through the crimson window blinds, and the only refreshing looking part of the whole concern were the rows of sparkling glasses ready to be filled with whatever you might order.

Jack and Frank each drank a glass of uncommonly small and sour beer, which helped to make them hotter

than before, but having come to the end of their money they could have no more, though they lingered to hear the talk of the men who were crowding up the place.

"'Twill be ever so much better than the regatta," said one; "they say 'twill be the finest race between they two horses as has ever been. I shall go over for certain myself; I don't see much in a boat race."

"Where's it going to be held?" asked another.

"Out by the common land beyond Teddington, a matter of four or five mile, maybe. I shall drive over in our bit of a trap; but 'tisn't above a walk for any as like to go."

Jack and Frank were pricking up their ears at this, and now the former nudged Frank and said:

"It wouldn't be such a bad lark if we were to go to the races, too. I expect this regatta will be a very slow affair, especially as your aunt and uncle intend coming in with us."

"Yes, but it's too hot to walk so far, Jack, and Uncle Fred would be sure to say 'no.'"

"Wait till he gets a chance; I've no notion of asking him, my boy. Tell me, Frank, how much money have you at home?"

"I've nothing left," Frank answered at first; then remembering, he said, "except the ten shillings I put by towards my watch chain."

"Oh, bother the watch chain, you can easily make that up again. I'll just enquire what they'd charge us for a trap to-morrow."

Frank didn't quite like the idea of sacrificing his ten shillings, so he said—

"I think you ought to pay some, Jack; haven't you any money of your own at all?"

"I shall get ever so much next week," he answered, "and then I'll pay it all back if you like: I'd just as soon stand treat for this, as it is my proposal."

And looking as if he was doing something very grand he entered the bar again.

"What do you charge for a trap for the day?" he asked, "for me and another fellow to drive ourselves to the races to-morrow?"

The barmaid looked at him rather superciliously, and not condescending to answer herself, called out "ostler" in a very unmelodious voice.

On Sanderson repeating his question, the ostler answered—

"Fifteen shillings, sir, dog-cart, and drive yourself, but if you want a driver to take care on you, that'll be five shillings more for him."

"Take care of us," laughed Sanderson, "I'm old enough to take care of myself, I hope. No, my man," he continued patronizingly, "I always drive myself, but I should like to see what sort of animals you have, first."

"All right, sir," answered the ostler, "I see you're used to this kind of thing; come this way, sir, and I'll show you as tidy a little mare as you ever held ribbons to."

He winked behind Jack's back to the barmaid, and led the boys to the stables.

The "tidy little mare" certainly did not deserve to be called "little," in that she was about seventeen hands high, and bony as a camel, but perhaps she made up for that in tidiness. She put back her ears, and looked from the corner of her eye suspiciously at the boys, who tried to examine her in an experienced way.

"Is she sound on her fore-legs?" asked Jack, taking a puff at his pipe, and spitting very quickly to get the taste out.

"Lor' bless you, as sound as I am," answered the man, who had knees like cannon balls, and very bandy thin legs below them, so that he certainly did not compromise himself by this statement. "You be used to driving I suppose, young gentleman; sir, I should say," he added, "she's a clipper to go, but if you don't understand a horse, I wouldn't advise you to tackle her."

"Oh dear yes," said Jack, "I've driven all my life." Which was true, in so far that he had driven occasionally ever since he was old enough, but as the principal part of his life had been spent at school, his experience was but small.

"Couldn't you find us another one, a quieter one?" asked Frank, who did not quite relish the idea of trusting himself entirely to Jack.

"Haven't another disengaged," said the man, "most all our traps is secured for the races to-morrow. They'll be uncommon good to be sure."

This settled the matter.

"Well, look here," said Jack, "we'll give you half a sovereign for the use of the trap. We shan't want it

all day, but will come here for it at eleven, and return it by five. Will that do?"

"Couldn't do it, sir. Master never lets any trap under twelve-and-six for half the day. Maybe he might consent to that if I was to do my best for you," he answered slyly, hoping for a tip for his pains.

After some whispering together the boys arranged that they would consider the matter settled, and would present themselves to-morrow at the appointed time.

When they had left and were proceeding to the water to regain their boat, Frank said—

"I don't see now how we are to manage it, Jack. If I get the money, how are we to avoid spending the day with aunt and uncle at the regatta?"

"Easily enough; just you coax Aunt Ethel for a little pocket money this evening. She's sure to give you half-a-crown at least, but you must try for more if you can, as we shall want something to eat. Perhaps Herbert can lend you some; he's one of your goody chaps who keeps a money box, I should think. As to getting away, why we shall miss them in the crowd, of course. The difficulty will be to keep together to-morrow, there'll be such a crush. We'll miss them, and won't find them again either," he said laughing, "till we walk in to dinner in the evening."

Frank looked and felt uneasy; he had not the courage to refuse to join in Sanderson's scheme, but he was afraid both of the plan itself and its possible consequences.

The thought of the raw-boned mare who required to

be "tackled" discomposed him, though he was ashamed to acknowledge this to Jack, consequently he grew out of temper, and being secretly displeased with himself, was displeased at everything around him.

"How beastly hot it is!" he said peevishly. "I hate summer weather like anything! Here, Jack, you must pull back; it's all against tide, and I'm done up."

As Jack was anxious to keep him in good temper just now he acceded, and they pulled silently for a while. Then Frank spoke again.

"I don't like the idea of asking Herbert for money. The poor little beggar has very few pleasures, and he wants his tin for himself as much as we do. If you can't get the money yourself, Jack, we'd best give up the idea of going."

"Give up the idea! What a baby you are! You're always for giving up directly there's any difficulty. What a piece of work you make about nothing. Didn't I tell you I mean to stand treat for the whole affair? Of course I shall repay Herbert or you in a day or two. Considering the expense is all mine, I think you are very ungrateful about it!"

Frank thought it was a very easy way of being at the expense of it; Jack had so often borrowed and forgotten to repay, that he did not build much upon this fine speech, but he gave up contesting the point, and like a weak-minded boy as he was, yielded to Jack's persuasions, and before the day was over, had borrowed five shillings from his cousin.





## CHAPTER XVI.

### OLD SCENES.

THOUGH Mr Everard's kindness helped greatly to lighten the weight of Hugh's trouble, yet the want of boys' companionship, and the false position in which he was placed made the time pass slowly, and he found it hard to be always cheerful.

There were many days when Mr Everard was engaged from home, and many hours of each day when he was perforce alone, or reduced to the society of Jim.

They took lessons from each other in their respective accomplishments, and when these were over, would have long talks on subjects not often discussed by boys of their years; for Jim's mind had grown fast, in proportion as his body had remained undeveloped.

One day, after they had been more than usually confidential, Jim remarked—

“If you won't be offended, Master Cameron, I should like to know how it came about that you, as think so much about right and wrong, should have gone and done what's kept you here this summer?”

Hugh was puzzled what to answer for a minute; at last he said—

"Jim, you and I both hate anything like meanness, so I'm sure I can trust you in what I'm going to say. I certainly did wrong to leave school that night, but I wasn't quite so bad as Mr Everard thinks ; but I can't tell him how it happened, so I'm just obliged to make the best of it."

"I see," answered Jim ; "I can make a pretty good guess at some of it. You may be sure I won't say a word to any one, but it seems hard, don't it? Things seem so hard sometimes in this world. The good they goes to the wall, and the bad they sit atop of 'em, and sometimes I get quite tired of it, and feel as if it would pay better to be wicked."

"Yes, it does," answered Hugh ; "that's what I wonder at often, Jim. Why does God let the people who try to be good get the worst of it?"

It was more than either of them could answer, and Hugh resolved that at some future time he would ask Mr Everard the same question.

He was often allowed to accompany him in his country walks or fishing excursions, and would sometimes go with him to the old church and stay for a length of time listening to his playing on the organ.

Mr Everard was a very good musician, and Hugh, who was unusually sensitive to music, would sit listening and dreaming, and trying to unravel all the mysteries that perplexed his young brain, quite forgetful of time, and place, and everything but the glorious swelling tones of the organ, and his own fancies.

It was on one of those days when the music had brought back to his mind his talk with Jim, that he said abruptly to Mr Everard, as they were leaving the church together :

"Mr Everard, Jim and I were wondering the other day why God lets people find it so hard to do right. He could make it easier to them if He liked, I suppose?"

"Hugh," answered Mr Everard, "in the old days when the Christian martyrs were torn to pieces by wild beasts for the faith they clung to to the last, do you think it was because there was no God to rescue or to pity them? Depend upon it, He does not *like* to seek His children suffer, but in suffering they conquer, and those who fight so hard against the difficulties around them are, no doubt, as great martyrs in His sight as the early Christians who took so bravely a cruel death."

"But it never seems to be over," said Hugh. "As fast as one difficulty is conquered another springs up. Is it like that with grown-up people? Must it always go on?"

"It must always go on, more or less, this side the grave, Hugh. We have sin, the world, and the devil round us always, and must wear our armour to the last. Our mortal nature will stick to us 'till we wake up after His likeness;' but I don't imagine that the careless have such a very happy time of it, though they often seem to get on best in worldly things; but no pleasure, no success, will make up for an unquiet con-

science, which will trouble them sooner or later. But what makes you think about this to-day? To what are you reverting?"

Hugh had of course been thinking of his unmerited punishment. He had received a letter from Mr Manners some time back, and one this morning from Frank, telling of the enjoyment they were having on the river.

It was a selfish little scrawl of a letter, full of caddish expressions, which were evident echoes of Sanderson.

So Hugh didn't answer Mr Everard, and the latter, not wishing to force his confidence, the subject was dropped.

Uncle Fred's letter had run thus :—

"My Dear Hugh,—Your aunt and I received Mr Everard's letter concerning you, with great pain. I agree with him in the justice of the punishment he has imposed upon you. I can only hope that it may be of lasting benefit to you, and that we shall be able to give you a deservedly hearty welcome at Christmas.—Your affectionate uncle,

"FREDERICK MANNERS."

It was not an unkind letter—on the whole not so bad as Hugh had expected—but it expressed no desire to hear from him in return, and he felt himself shut out from communicating with any of them for the present.

He was yawning over a rather dull book one forenoon, having employed his morning in the garden, rooting out every perceptible weed, and raking each flower-bed into perfect neatness, when he heard Mr Everard calling him.

"Cameron, I find I have to go to Compton Magna this afternoon. Would you like to drive there with me?"

Hugh's heart leapt, half with pleasure, half with pain at the thought. He had not been there since his father's death; he had not even seen the stone placed to his memory. He had often longed to go, yet now he dreaded it; still he answered—

"Thank you, sir, I should like it; at least, I should not like to stay away."

"I shall start in half-an-hour," said Mr Everard. "If Jim is anywhere about, you can tell him he can have the back seat; a drive will do him good, poor lad. Come in and get some lunch as soon as you can."

Mr Everard's dog-cart might have been called the town dog-cart. He lent it to others far more than he used it himself, and picked up any queer-looking people who seemed to want a lift.

Sometimes he might be seen with a decrepit old man by his side, who otherwise would not have seen more than the dusty road outside his cottage from year to year. Sometimes he would drive miles out of his way to help some small tradesman, who could keep no cart, on his weary journey; and had driven through the

town once with the fat old washerwoman and her basket of linen, over which he had found her panting at the bottom of the hill.

So though Jim's corduroys and poor mis-shapen figure made him anything but a dapper-looking groom, he was put up behind, and they drove off.

"Are you going to pay any visits, sir?" asked Hugh. "I needn't go with you into the houses, need I?"

"Not if you particularly wish otherwise, but what will you do with yourself in the meanwhile?"

"I have several places I should like to go to," answered Hugh gravely. "I should like to go to the churchyard, and—home," he said, meaning, of course, the house where he had lived with his father, and which was still "home" in his own mind.

"Very well," said Mr Everard. "I will look you up in an hour's time. We will put up the dog-cart at the 'Coach and Horses,' and we can meet again there."

They had spent some time on the road, for the cunning horse, knowing his master's weak point, took good care not to knock himself up by over-exertion, and made a point of stopping at the bottom of each hill as a gentle hint to those inside to get out and walk up it.

Hugh's eyes were all round him at once as they approached the little town. It was so little changed, it seemed incredible that he had been away. There was the old turnpike man in the same sealskin hat he had worn, summer and winter, for so many years. Here

was the travelling hardware man, with his basket of crockery poised upon his head, toiling along, unable to move sufficiently to wipe the perspiration from his face. He looked sideways at them as they passed, but Hugh knew he could not set his burden down unless he met some fellow-creature to help him, or he would have thrown him a sixpence for old times' sake.

"Poor old chap!" he said sympathisingly, "he's walked about the country like that for years. What a life it must be!"

The man was going in an opposite direction, or no doubt Mr Everard would have transferred him and his basket of pottery to the dog-cart. As it was, they were obliged to pass on their way.

As soon as Hugh found himself alone, he went at once in the direction of his old home. The house had not been taken by the Doctor who succeeded Dr Cameron, but had been purchased by a retired tea-dealer, and Hugh felt angry and jealous, as if the place still belonged to him, when he saw the alterations which had been made by the new occupant.

"Why, they've cut down half the shrubbery," he thought, indignantly, "and the lilacs father planted; and what on earth have they done to the verandah?"

The verandah, which ran round two sides of the house, and used in their time to be covered with noisette roses, had been stripped of all creepers, and rebuilt in a sort of pagoda style, painted in stripes of green and white, with gilt knobs at the top, and plaster casts on pedestals placed at intervals underneath it.

A lady in a very shiny silk dress, which showed two colours as she moved, and with bunches of black curls fastened with combs, on either side of her face, was on the lawn, and by her side was what is generally called a "comfortable" looking gentleman; but he looked very uncomfortable this warm day, and had laid aside his coat, and was strolling about in his shirt sleeves.

It looked so unlike the dear old home that Hugh turned away in pain. It was hard to see it so changed, but perhaps it would have been harder still to see it as he remembered it.

So he took his way sadly to the churchyard. He had put it off to the last, dreading it, but he need not have done so. It soothed and quieted him to stand there in God's ground, in proportion as his visit to his former home had irritated and incensed him.

There were none here to watch him, and nothing to jar upon his feelings. There was the grave-stone chosen by himself, of the flat white cross lying upon granite.

The soft warm air was full of the noise of bees and summer insects feeding on the flowers which grew all round, and the long grass was gently undulating with the westerly wind.

Hugh sat there a long time—he sat there thinking and praying. Then he took one of the roses that were blooming on the bush placed at the head of the grave, and, looking round first with boyish dread of being seen to do anything romantic, stooped and kissed the stone which covered his dead father's body, and came away.





## CHAPTER XVII.

### JACK TAKES HIS OWN WAY.

IT would have been a happy thing for Sanderson and Frank had Herbert been less obliging, or had the weather proved unpropitious for the morrow's trip. As it was, the sun could not have shone more brightly, or the air been more delightfully balmy, than the day brought with it.

Mr Manners had engaged a waggonette to convey them to Richmond, as the children were also to be of the party, and the river would be so crowded as to be scarcely safe.

"Couldn't Frank and I pull up by water, sir?" asked Jack, thinking this would enable them to slip off more easily.

"Why should you do so?" enquired Uncle Fred; "there is plenty of room for all in the carriage, and I should not feel comfortable in trusting you two alone on such a day as this. No, we must keep together. There will be all sorts of rough people about, and we might not be able to find one another if we parted."

Then Uncle Fred employed them in packing a hamper for luncheon, which they were to take out of doors. The excursion was chiefly on the children's

account, who looked upon the pic-nic part of it as the best of the whole.

"Such a childish affair," began Jack, when they were alone. "Fancy being stewed up all day with a lot of kids, and having to wipe their sticky mouths and fingers. No, thank you."

"I daresay it will be jolly enough," returned Frank. "We shall have a capital view of the regatta, and it will be ever so much cooler than on the race-course."

But Sanderson pooh-poohed all Frank's remonstrances, and laughed at his fears; and as he dreaded nothing so much as ridicule, he gave up contesting the point.

As they got near Richmond the road was very crowded, carriages and vehicles of every description were hurrying on, and the clouds of dust raised by the traffic were blinding.

The children were so excited that they helped to make everybody hotter by constantly changing places, so as to get, as they thought, a better view.

"It will be all right in a few minutes when we get out of this dust," said Aunt Ethel. "Sit still, Georgie, we are going into a meadow soon, then you can get out and pick buttercups, and be as restless as you like."

And when they reached the cool shady meadow it was a great relief to all. Poor Aunt Ethel had borne the worst of it, as in addition to holding Maud on her lap, she had held Georgie in safety for the last half mile, as he would insist upon standing up on the seat, and

had given her sunshade to Herbert, fearing the heat would be too much for him.

Uncle Fred was on the box with the driver, and Jack and Frank were too selfish and preoccupied to help her.

"My dear, how flushed you are," said Mr Manners. "You don't seem to have enjoyed your drive."

Aunt Ethel laughed a little.

"I shall be all right soon," she said, "especially if you'll open one of the baskets and given me something to drink."

Sanderson, who was waiting his chance, said readily—

"Let us run and bring you a bottle of lemonade, Mrs Manners; I know a shop where they keep first-rate stuff."

"Oh, no," she said; "it is very kind of you, Jack, but there is plenty here. You may undo that basket, if you will, and get out a bottle."

This was not exactly the way in which Jack had meant to wait upon Mrs Manners, but he was obliged to be useful now whether he liked it or no.

There were a great number of people in the meadow arranging themselves something after the same manner, but it was quiet by comparison with the other side of the river where the town lay.

To watch the people on the water was incessant amusement. It was wonderful to see so many boats of all shapes and sizes crowding so closely without accidents.

Not quite, though. Just now as they are admiring a bright little pleasure boat filled with young men and girls, it is suddenly run into by a larger craft, and in a minute, without any warning save a shrill shriek from one of its occupants, it is down, doused so completely under water, that the marvel seems that boats ever fulfil their purpose, if it is so easy to capsize them.

Three or four boatmen, waiting about apparently in readiness for such emergencies, row at once to the spot, and almost as soon as the unfortunate party are immersed, they are rescued and placed in safety.

"How dreadful!" said Aunt Ethel, who had been looking on. "Are they all up yet—will they all recover, do you think?"

"Yes; they were scarcely in the water before they were out again. I don't suppose they can be seriously injured. See! there is the girl who wore the mass of plaits on her head."

The poor girl was gasping and wringing out the water from her hair which now fell to her waist.

Seeing Mr and Mrs Manners so intently engaged, Jack twitched Frank's sleeve, and they slipped quietly away from the field undiscovered, until some five minutes after, when Aunt Ethel exclaimed—

"Why, Jack and Frank are not here. They must have run across the bridge to see the result of the accident. They were here when the boat went down."

"How foolish of them," said Mr Manners. "They'll have a long hot run for nothing, for by the time they

get to the other side of the river, the people will be tucked up in bed somewhere. They know their way back, that's one thing, and will be pretty sure to be here at feeding time."

In the meanwhile the two boys were scampering as if pursued by evil spirits into the town.

They were indeed pursued, both of them; Frank by an unquiet mind, and Jack by the consciousness that he had managed clumsily, and would have some difficulty in accounting to Mr Manners for their sudden disappearance.

But the determination not to be overcome by obstacles was strong within him; a power that might have made a great man of him if he had only suffered it to lead him to right-doing, instead of wrong.

"Now then, Piccaninny, pluck up your heart and come along," he said to Frank. "Which street is this we are in? Oh, I see; there's the bun shop; and this is the turning we go down to the 'Cat and Fiddle,' isn't it? All right, here we are."

The ostler had not apparently relied much upon their promise to return, as the trap was not in readiness, though they were past time; but on their producing the twelve and sixpence, which was required to be paid in advance, he got the mare in harness, whilst Jack and Frank refreshed themselves at the bar.

They drank a great deal more beer than was good for them. Jack had ordered bitter ale, and it was strong stuff, and heady, especially after their hot race

in the sun. Then Jack brought out his pocket-flask and had it filled with brandy.

"We can get things to eat down there, Frank, we needn't burden ourselves with more than this."

The beer had got into Frank's head, and he felt excited, and was less afraid of the mare than he had been before ; and the trap being now ready, they prepared to take their seats.

"Which is the road, ostler," demanded Sanderson. "I don't know my way about here."

"You just keep ahind that gentleman, sir, till you're clear of the town. He goes as far as the Teddington turning—then you keep to the road straight ahead till you get to Teddington, when anyone will tell you the way to the race-course. Hold the reins lightly, and give her her head a bit, and she'll go like a bird. Wo-ho, my lamb !" he said, giving the mare a parting pat as he let her go.

The lamb gave two or three bounds, which nearly threw Frank out of the cart, then settled into a swinging trot, shaking her head and keeping back her ears, in anything but a lamb-like manner. The ostler stood on the curb-stone for half a minute watching them, then saying to himself—

"If he don't bear a lighter hand on the reins, there'll be mischief," he shook his head ominously, and returned to his stables.

After a few minutes they lost sight of the gentleman indicated by the ostler, who happened to be a butcher

in a blouse and apron, taking his meat into the country, and they found themselves swinging along the Teddington road, with nothing to interrupt their course.

The race to which they were bound was in fact but a very trumpery affair, got up by a few jockeys, and would be attended only by a like set of people.



The ostler stood on the curb-stone for half a minute watching them.

The freedom, the exhilaration of driving so fast through the air,—for the mare was certainly the “clipper” described,—and the amount of beer Jack had drunk, made him in uproarious spirits.

On Frank the effect of the beer was transient ; he felt now heavy and dull, and his nervousness returned in greater force than ever.

"Do take care, Jack ; don't let her dash down hill like that. Look at that horrible place further on ; supposing she were to dash over !"

"Supposing she were to jump over the moon !" replied he ; "don't be such a ninny, Frank ; here, take a tip of Cognac to keep you up."

And taking a long pull at the flask himself, he handed it to Frank, who was too frightened to follow his example.







## CHAPTER XVIII.

### THE CONSEQUENCES.

THEY had travelled some distance along the road by this time, and had met no one lately of whom to enquire their way; possibly they had diverged from the right road, for the country through which they were passing was wild and lonely.

The place to which Frank alluded was a sudden slip or ravine on one side of the road, of some five-and-twenty or thirty feet in depth; there was a lane cut beneath it which branched off in another direction, and the high road, as you often see in country places, was unprotected by any pailing save the rotten remains of one or two posts, which had been put up when the alterations were first made.

"A nasty place by night if one didn't know the way," remarked Jack; "but the road is wide enough for half-a-dozen such traps as this in broad daylight. Hold on tight. The ground is level now. I'm going to put her through her paces, and see what she can do."

And excited by the spirits he had drunk, Jack gathered up the reins, and "let in to her," as he called it, with the whip, intending to drive over the ground in fine style.



SWAIN SC

“The mare reared wildly, and in another moment the carriage, boys, and herself fell in a confused heap into the ravine below.”

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The mare, who was vicious, and good for nothing save her strength and speed, plunged from one side to the other at this unusual treatment, and Sanderson, who imagined he would conquer her by punishment, pulled and flogged, regardless of Frank's screams and entreaties.

At last the angry brute, after bounding and kicking, and doing all she could to rid herself of her burden, set off at full speed, and galloped madly along the road.

Frank in an agony of fear clutched at the reins in hopes of helping Sanderson, who turned upon him angrily.

"Don't be such a fool, Frank! leave go, will you, and let me manage the brute myself."

But the boy was too frightened to listen to common sense, and pulled more furiously than ever at the rein he had secured.

They were close on the edge of the ravine now. The mare, checked in her course, backed, then reared wildly, and in another moment the carriage, boys, and herself fell in a confused heap into the ravine below.

It was the last piece of mischief the poor mare was destined to work. She rolled over as she fell on the uneven ground, and broke her neck by her own weight, and after a few convulsive kicks and groans lay motionless.

A ghastly sight, had there been any to witness it! The distorted body of the poor brute, whose eyes seemed starting from her head even though dead,

with her tongue, which she had bitten in the agonies of death, protruding from her mouth—the carriage, broken short off the shafts, and with one wheel off, was lying on its side, and the ground around was covered with the debris of smashed lamp-glasses, and splinters from all parts of the trap.

Frank's light weight had operated so far in his favour, when the carriage toppled over, as to throw him a considerable distance on to the grassy roadside, where he lay unconscious, stunned by the violence of the blow as he touched the ground.

He had hit his temple against a large stone, and the blood, which was trickling down his face, made it look livid in its paleness.

But Jack! surely if he is alive yet, life cannot hold on long in such a condition. With his legs twisted, and the whole weight of the mare lying upon them, little could be seen of him but the upper part of his body, and his ghastly face turned up to the sky.

There they both lay, at present insensible to pain, or time, as hour after hour passed by, and none saw or came to their succour. If anyone travelled along the upper road they did not happen to walk that side, and look down, and the lower pathway was but a grass grown lane, used solely for carts and waggons going backwards and forwards to the fields.

Poor Jack, if he could have foreseen in the sunny morning of that beautiful day what his thoughtless folly would bring him to ere night, how thankfully he would

have accepted the dullest day, and the company of the smallest babies in exchange.

As the hours wore on, and twilight set in, a faint groan escaped occasionally from him, but he did not open his eyes, or speak; and in this pitiful condition they both lay till the evening dew fell heavily upon them, and the quiet stars began to lighten up the sky.

Mr and Mrs Manners were annoyed at first at the protracted absence of the boys; then as dinner time passed by, Mr Manners got angry, and said to his wife—

“There’s something very suspicious to me in the sudden flight of those two boys: it is quite impossible they don’t know their way back here. They have been several times in the town, and along the banks of the river, and could easily have found us if they chose.”

“Very likely they have forgotten how the time is passing,” said Aunt Ethel kindly. “Perhaps they are so taken up with the fun in the town that they have never looked at the clock.”

“The truth is,” answered Uncle Fred, “that I don’t feel much confidence in Jack Sanderson; he is not an openly bad boy, whose faults you can see at once, but he is so deep that I never know how to take him. I remember now that he seemed very anxious to make off with Frank twice to-day, but I did not suspect anything at the time.”

“Then don’t suspect him now, dear,” answered Aunt Ethel, “at any rate till it is proved against him. I

can't think Frank would fall in with any underhand trick of that sort, even if Jack would, which I should be sorrow to believe."

"I'm sure I don't know," said Mr Manners; "boys learn so much harm from one another at school. How highly both we and Mr Everard thought of Hugh, remember; and yet he has proved himself quite untrustworthy."

It was very vexing, but Aunt Ethel tried to make the best of it, being sorry that their day of pleasure should be spoiled, so she said, cheerfully—

"Well, at any rate, let's have our dinner now. If they come in late, they will be well served by having only the remains."

So she and the children set about unpacking the hampers, and arranging the luncheon. And if Mr and Mrs Manners felt too fidgetty to do full justice to it, the children performed their part very creditably.

But as the bright day drew to a close, and the boat races were over, and the heat was giving place to a delightful evening breeze, there were still no signs of Jack and Frank.

Mrs Manners got really alarmed now. "Can they possibly have been so foolish as to have been tempted to try the water," she thought; but she said nothing at first to Uncle Fred, fearing to frighten him unnecessarily.

The scene they had witnessed in the morning recurred perpetually to her. She could see the little

boat sinking like a stone dropped into the water, and a horror lest Jack and Frank might have met with such an accident, without such timely aid as the pleasure party had received, took possession of her.

When it became time to put to the horses for their return home she could refrain no longer from expressing her fears to Mr Manners.

"It is not likely at all, my dear," he answered. "I know they have neither of them any money left. Frank asked me for some to 'lend to Jack,' he said yesterday, but I told him he had spent his last much too fast, and gave him no more. So you needn't make yourself uneasy on that score."

Herbert, who was listening to the conversation, said—"Frank had five shillings, Father; I lent it to him yesterday."

"Did he ask you for it?" demanded Mr Manners.

"Yes," answered Herbert reluctantly, "but only for two or three days, father; he promised to repay me soon."

Mr Manners gave a sigh of impatience, as if he felt the guardianship of his nephews too much for him.

"I must put you in the carriage," he said, "and see you all off, and I will stay behind and look them up. The town is quieter now; depend upon it I shall soon meet with them, and we will walk home together."

"Yes, do stay," replied Aunt Ethel, nervously, "and enquire of the boatmen if they know anything of them. I shall be so fidgetty till you get back; somehow I



can't get rid of the idea that they have met with some accident."

Uncle Fred laughed at her, and tried to reassure her.

"You'd best get back then," he said, "if you've made up your mind to receive them half drowned, and get blankets and hot water ready. Depend upon it the only warming they will want will be a good flogging apiece for frightening you so. You've been over-tired and over-excited to-day, and are nervous."

Then he packed them all carefully into the carriage, and, after seeing them start, turned into the town to trace if possible his tiresome charges.

But of course all his search was in vain—no one had heard or seen anything of two such young gentlemen at the landing quay, nor at the various pastry-cooks and principal shops at which Uncle Fred enquired, and after walking about for an hour or two he was obliged to return late in the evening, hoping that after all he should find they had got home before him, being unable to find their way back to the meadow they had occupied.

But Mrs Manners met him on the door-step as he was about to enter with the anxious question, "Alone, Frederick? Have you heard nothing of them?"

And his heart sank also with apprehension when he found they had not returned at this late hour.

It was between eight and nine o'clock now, but Uncle Fred set off at once to return to Richmond, to give information of their loss at the police station, and to desire that a thorough search might be set on foot.

The inspector took down every detail concerning them.

"It shall be seen to as far as possible at once, sir; but I fear it is too late to do much to-night. There is no moon at present, and it would be impossible to drag the river till daylight."

"God forbid it should be as bad as that," rejoined Mr Manners; "surely any river accident would be known of immediately?"

The inspector looked doubtful.

"If you'd lived as long by the water as I have, sir, you'd think as I do. Accidents happen every week; and on such a day as this has been, it seems the only way to account for their disappearance."

So with a heavy heart and a weary body, Uncle Fred began once more to retrace his steps homewards.





## CHAPTER XIX.

### AWAKENING.

ALL through that weary summer night of pain, Jack, who had returned to consciousness soon after we left him, lay staring up into the dark blue sky, illuminated with its thousand stars, which returned his gaze so peacefully and serenely, that they seemed to him to mock his agony.

He lay there, in mortal pain, unable to move more than his head and hands, unable to cry aloud for help, and unable to turn sufficiently even to see where Frank might be. He called him feebly several times, but the boy, who was suffering from concussion of the brain, was still lying motionless, just as he had fallen, and insensible to all around him.

Jack could remember all now; gradually there came back to him all the occurrences of the day, and not of this day only, but of many such days of wrong and folly. There, as he lay dying, as he thought, crushed and mangled, and suffering as he could not have imagined human nature could suffer, and yet retain consciousness, all his past wrong-doing rose up before him in its blackest colours.

"God have mercy upon me!" he groaned, and I think it was the first real prayer Jack had sent up for many a year. "God have mercy upon me! Is Frank's blood on my head also?"

Then he thought of his mother, who had been so disappointed at his electing to pass his holidays away from home. That kind indulgent mother, who had always been with him in former times of sickness. What would he not have given now to have her by him, before he died out here alone in the darkness!

That dear old mother! how good and gentle she had always been! and how often he had repulsed her affection, and how he must have wounded her, he felt now in full force. Oh! if he could but kiss her once, and ask her to forgive him!

And Hugh! how he had hated Hugh, and only because he was better than himself. Why, even now Hugh was suffering for his wrong-doing, and till to-night he had never felt one twinge of remorse for his share in that business.

Frank, too! he would have been as readily led to good by his brother, as he had been to evil by himself. What had he worked there but sin? Surely the faults of Frank would be visited on him!

"Woe unto that man by whom the offence cometh."

"It were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea."

And as Jack remembered these and similar words

referring to God's anger against those who lead others astray, he covered his face with his hands and shuddered, as if he heard God's voice speaking to him; and he trembled as if he were in the actual presence of the Creator of the glorious firmament which surrounded him. Yes, assuredly God the Father was there, revealing Himself in all His majesty; assuredly the Spirit of God was there, speaking to Jack in the still small voice of his awakened conscience; assuredly the merciful Son of God was there, ready to intercede for him at the first indication of his sorrow.

But at present, Jack could feel only the terrible realization of his own wickedness. He thought of David's words—

“Mine iniquities are gone over my head as an heavy burden, they are too heavy for me.”

And in remorse of mind and fearful bodily pain, he continued till morning broke, and God, who was his Father still, however unworthy His child might be, sent help to him in his extremity.

On the morning following the regatta day, Mr Dupuis rose before sunrise for the purpose of taking a long country walk, of which he was very fond. He was a great entomologist as well as botanist, and had found by experience that when the sun had but just risen, and the dew was fresh upon every blade of grass, all the insects were making the most of the restored light to find breakfasts for themselves and their families,

and many were the specimens of fat bodied beetles and fearfully hairy spiders secured by him on these occasions.

In the oldest and most disreputable suit of clothes, with a battered Jim Crow hat covered with a pugrie, set on the back of his head, his large spectacles glistening in the bright morning sun, and a specimen box for both plants and insects strapped across his shoulders, Mr Dupuis certainly was an object to excite remark.

At a first glance it would have been difficult to say what was his calling. Judging from his coat and box, he might have been a travelling pedlar, but that he looked every inch a gentleman through it all.

Probably the general opinion would have been that he was an escaped lunatic, had there been anyone near to speculate upon him, but the early hour and the loneliness of the country he chose for his rambles, saved him from much criticism.

He was strolling quietly along the road, with his hands crossed behind his back, peering first on one side, and then on the other into the hedgerows, and stopping now and then to inhale the pure, sweet morning air. He had just done this, and been in imminent danger of swallowing a large spider at the same time, having broken with his nose the delicate web the creature was spinning across the road, when he heard a noise which attracted, and brought him as it were to life again.

There was no man more practical or to be relied on

than Mr Dupuis when roused from the abstraction of his studies, and now as he heard, or fancied he heard, the strange noise again, he walked rapidly forward to the place from whence the sound appeared to come.

There was no mistake about it—there it was again—a long, weary groan of intense suffering. Mr Dupuis set off running towards the little ravine he could now see on the further side of the road, thereby so shaking up his specimens that he broke a bird's egg never before met with by him, and knocked off some of the legs of his best cockchafer.

When he reached the spot and saw at a glance the fearful accident which had occurred, he swung himself over the side, holding by one hand to the post above, and scrambled down the bank easily enough.

But shocked as he was at the terrible sight, he was more than ever shocked when he recognised the faces of Jack Sanderson and Frank Cameron.

Jack opened his eyes languidly—he was too weak to be surprised at seeing Mr Dupuis. That gentleman did not waste time in asking any unnecessary questions as to the cause of the accident. He knelt down by Jack, and taking a small flask of sherry from his pocket, poured some of it down the lad's throat.

It was impossible for him to attempt to release him from his imprisonment alone, so he passed to Frank, and seeing there was nothing to be done for him but to place him in a more comfortable position in the shade, he returned and said—

"Jack, I must find help at once. I will not be gone a minute longer than is necessary."

Then he unwound the pugrie from his hat, and arranged it so as to shade the poor boy's head and face from the sun, which was getting powerful, and leaving the encumbrance of his specimen box behind him, ran as hard as he could towards the nearest habitation he could espy.

This happened to be a cottage attached to a water-mill, which at present was not working. The house was inhabited though, as he could see smoke issuing from the chimney. When he rushed in out of breath with running, not waiting for the ceremony of knocking at the door, the inhabitants, who were getting their breakfast, stared at him as one daft.

"I want help at once," he said. "There has been a fearful carriage accident near here. Who is in the house who can assist me by fetching a doctor and a conveyance from Richmond?"

A young woman, who was frying bacon and potatoes, answered—

"There's no man about the place but my Jim, sir, and he's abed with the rheumatick, worse luck. There's the children and me,—could we do anything to help you?"

"Can this lad take a note?" he asked, pointing to the biggest of the lot, who was staring at him. And he hastily tore a leaf from his pocket-book, and wrote in pencil to a well-known surgeon in town, begging him to



attend and bring all necessary help with him. "If he runs off at once and delivers it properly, he shall have half-a-crown for his pains."

"Get your cap, Bill, and be off," said his mother, and the boy, who was little more than a child, but intelligent enough, spurred on by the reward, which seemed to him a fortune, left his half-finished breakfast and was off on his errand immediately.

There was nothing more that Mr Dupuis could do but return at once to the scene of misery, whither the kind-hearted young woman accompanied him, carrying some water and lending what assistance she could.

"I'll just run home," she said, "and tell my Jim where I be going, and then I'll cross over to Farmer Stones—'tis but three-parts of a mile from here across the fields. He'd be able to send some men over to help at once."

Mr Dupuis agreeing with her in this, she turned homewards on her charitable errand.

Then he sat down by Jack's side, able to do little but pity him. He had borrowed an umbrella from the cottage, which he held so as to shade Jack from the sun, and he gave him water as he asked for it, and kept off the flies which the dead body of the horse attracted. But the time passed very slowly, though in reality it was in less than an hour's time that he heard the sound of approaching wheels, and to his relief recognised the doctor's carriage, with little Bill packed in by his side.

Almost at the same moment Bill's mother was seen coming from the opposite direction, with three or four farming men accompanying her.

Mr Dupuis went to meet the doctor.

"God knows if anything can be done," he said in a low voice. "It is a fearful case, but they must be got home somehow."

"You have secured help, I see," answered Dr Coles. "That is well. The carriage to convey them back is now on the road here."

Then he proceeded at once to the patients, and having spoken to and examined them as far as possible, said gently to Jack—

"You will not suffer so much shortly, but you must be brave for a few minutes whilst the men remove this dead brute from off you."

And the doctor had to keep down a sigh that was nearly escaping him, when he thought how much he could wish that it was not so evident that Jack's pain was nearly over.

Jack, who, with all his faults, never wanted pluck, said faintly—

"Never mind me, get the brute off, and carry me back, if possible."

Then he closed his eyes and set his teeth, determined to endure, whilst the men, with ropes and their united strength, dragged the mare's body from his poor crushed limbs.



## CHAPTER XX.

### THE TELEGRAM.

DR COLES poured some stimulant down Jack's throat, who heaved a deep sigh of relief as the weight of the mare's carcase was removed from him. Then the doctor proceeded to examine his body, handling him with extreme care. But Jack either bore it with remarkable fortitude, or else he was surely not so badly hurt as was at first supposed.

"Both legs broken?" enquired Mr Dupuis, anxiously, taking the doctor on one side.

"No, neither," he replied, curtly; "but I cannot ascertain the extent of the injury here. We must get them back at once. If you will call up the carriage I ordered to take them home, I will, I think, accompany them myself. Someone ought to go to their friends to prepare them for their reception."

"I will do so," replied Mr Dupuis, "if you will let your man drive me there."

Then he went to Jack to learn from him Mr Manners' address. And raised in the strong arms of the men who had come over to assist, the two boys were laid on the hospital carriage, kept on purpose for such emergencies.

Jack looked at Frank, whom he now saw for the first time, and closed his eyes with a groan, at the confirmation, as he supposed, of his fears. He took him to be dead, as indeed he looked, and he felt as if he were his murderer.

But Jack bore being lifted up and placed by his side almost as quietly as the poor insensible boy. As the doctor had told him, his pain was fast subsiding. He had suffered enough indeed during the last twenty-four hours, and, excepting for a dull, heavy aching in his back, was comparatively at ease now.

And so, with many halts on the road, as the doctor considered necessary to recruit their strength, they proceeded slowly towards Mr Manners' cottage.

As Mr Dupuis was being whirled along by the doctor's groom, he met three or four policemen going in the opposite direction, who stopped him to make inquiries. They were men sent by the inspector in search of the boys, of whom they had gained tidings that morning from the owner of the missing dog-cart and mare; but as Jack in his excitement had taken a wrong turning, and had deviated far from the Teddington Road, some time had been lost, from the search having been so far prosecuted in a wrong direction.

In the meantime, Mr and Mrs Manners had been passing a night of great anxiety. They had not taken off their clothes to go to bed, but sat up, hoping against hope that every hour might see the wanderers return; and as soon as it was daylight, Uncle Fred had returned

to the Police Station, and had been ever since personally helping in the search. Aunt Ethel was therefore alone when Mr Dupuis drove up, and on seeing a stranger, guessed in a minute what was his errand, and went into the garden to meet him.

As he raised his hat and asked for Mr Manners, she answered—

“He is not here ; he is helping to look for our lost boys. If you come on their account, please tell me all you know. I am Frank's aunt.”

Mr Dupuis was half afraid to tell her all until he saw how quiet and calm she was, and she said—

“You need not be afraid to tell me. I must know it sooner or later. Are they dead ?”

“No,” he answered, “they are not dead, thank God, but they have met with a severe accident. Dr Coles has seen to them, and is bringing them home. I have come on in advance to beg you to have bedrooms prepared for them against their arrival.”

Aunt Ethel was very white, and she held by one hand to the porch pillar, but she answered firmly and without tears—

“It shall be seen to at once ; please come in and sit down whilst I give orders.”

And in a quarter of an hour she returned to Mr Dupuis, and learnt from him all particulars, as far at least as he could give them—for, of course, he knew nothing of the origin of the affair ; but she heard of the fearful condition in which they both lay ; and though

she felt sick and faint at the idea of meeting them, she did not speak of it, but kept back her tears and her trouble till she could be of no further use.

And then she took care of poor Mr Dupuis, who had had so much running about and excitement, that he greatly needed some refreshment ; and as they sat together waiting for the arrival of the carriage, he told her of his connection with the school, and previous knowledge of the boys.

Soon after they saw the carriage coming gently along, followed by a troop of children and idle people, who could with difficulty be kept out of the garden ; but they locked the gates upon them, and admitted only those who came from kindness, and not from curiosity.

Luckily for Aunt Ethel, Uncle Fred had met and returned with them, and his presence helped her to receive them with composure.

But it was hard work ! To look at Jack's poor pinched face that looked ten years older than when they had parted yesterday ; and to see Frank, who had been the embodiment of fun and nonsense, lying as motionless as if already dead !

They poured a little wine down Jack's throat, and then he and Frank were carried up stairs, and laid in the cool darkened rooms prepared for them ; and after a little rest, Dr Coles, who was still in the house, revisited them, with a view of ascertaining the amount of mischief done.

He was but a very short time upstairs, and returned

with a grave face to Mr and Mrs Manners, who were expecting him.

"It is as I feared," he said, "with regard to young Sanderson. His injuries are so great that he will never walk again."

"What do you mean?" asked Aunt Ethel, in horror. "You do not mean that you will have to amputate his legs, do you?"

"No," he answered. "I hope and trust not; the injury is to the spine. The lower limbs are paralyzed, and, I fear, without hope of improvement."

Aunt Ethel turned very sick, and laid her head on the cool mantel-piece.

"And about my nephew?" asked Uncle Fred; "is there any hope of his recovery?"

"It is difficult to say as yet. He is suffering from severe concussion of the brain; but I hope, as he has youth and health in his favour, he may yet do well. I have given every direction with regard to their treatment, and must leave now, but I will come back again as early as I can this evening."

And then, with a few words of sympathy to them, he said "Good-bye," and left them alone.

Poor Aunt Ethel put down her head and had her cry out now; but she did not indulge her grief very long, for there was plenty to be done, as you may suppose.

"We must let Hugh know of this," said Uncle Fred. "Frank's condition is so uncertain, that Hugh ought to come here at once. I will send the gardener to Richmond to telegraph to Mr Everard."

But Mr Dupuis, who was about to leave, took this upon himself, and throughout the painful busy time that followed, he was ever ready to help them by every means in his power, and Aunt Ethel learnt to look for his daily visit as one of the bright spots in the melancholy hours of nursing.

At the very time that his brother lay in momentary danger of death, Hugh had been passing a particularly happy morning with Mr Everard and Jim, helping to build a fernery in the little copse which adjoined the garden.

They had done the most part of the work with their own hands, and had this morning been planting the ferns and rock plants, which they had taken many excursions in search of. It looked so cool and refreshing now that it was completed, with the graceful boughs of the bright green larches waving over their heads, and the moist earth smelling so healthful, as Hugh gave the ferns their final can of water, that he was unwilling to go in, and, as Mr Everard suggested, scrub himself well before dinner.

"Your face is almost as grimy as your hands, Hugh," he said, laughing, as he placed his hand under the boy's chin and turned up his rosy, sunburnt face, which was enriched in colour on the tip of his nose, and wherever Hugh had touched it with his dirty fingers, with streaks of mould.

They were still looking at, and admiring their work, when Lucy, the good-natured housemaid, came running



to Mr Everard with a large yellow envelope in her hand.

"Telegram for you, please sir," she said, looking very much as if she would have liked to know what was inside.

Mr Everard took it from her and opened it quietly, and as soon as he began to read, turned his back on Hugh and walked a little away.

Somehow, Hugh felt in a moment that the telegram concerned him, and he followed Mr Everard, and said anxiously :

"Is it anything for me, sir? Is it about Frank?"

Mr Everard stopped and laid his hand on Hugh's shoulder.

"It is for you, my boy. Try to be brave and calm, Hugh. Frank has met with an accident, and your uncle wishes you to go there at once."

He made as light of it as he could, wishing to break the news gradually, but Mr Dupuis' telegram ran thus :

"Cameron to come here immediately. Frank has met with an accident, and may not live many hours."

"May I see it, sir?" Hugh asked, stretching out his hand for the paper, and on Mr Everard's still keeping it back, he exclaimed—

"He is dead, I know he is dead, or you would let me read it for myself."

Then Mr Everard let him have it, and as he read, the colour and the sunburn seemed all to die out of poor Hugh's face at once, leaving only a deathly pallor and the streaks of mud behind.

He stood for a minute under the shady larch trees almost as if stunned ; he did not feel the least inclined to cry, nor indeed could he realise that he was feeling anything. The shock was very great to him, poor child, but his power of feeling came back all too soon, as he found afterwards ; and in future years he never smelt the peculiar fresh odour the earth gives when watered in warm weather, or caught sight of the shadows thrown by larch boughs, but the vision of a large yellow envelope, and the sickly feeling of that sudden check to his happiness, crossed his mind simultaneously.





## CHAPTER XXI.

### SUSPENSE.

MR EVERARD, who had been consulting the train timetable, came up to Hugh and said, "It is not possible for you to get to Richmond to-night ; there is no train from here till half-past three, but you must start by that for London, and get on by the earliest train to-morrow morning. Come with me and we will see to packing your portmanteau.

Hugh obeyed mechanically, and collected what he would require, and followed Mr Everard about as if in a dream.

Then they sat down to dinner, but the smell of the hot meat was so repugnant to Hugh, that Mr Everard did not urge him to eat, but desired Jenkins to pack up a basket of food and wine.

Hugh was looking idly out of window at nothing in particular, only wishing that the clock would go faster, and that he might start on his way to his brother, when he felt something soft and warm steal round his neck, and nestle under his chin. It was poor little Frisky, Frank's mouse, whom Hugh in his abstraction had forgotten to feed at dinner time.

As he took the little thing in his hand, and it looked at him with its bright wistful eyes, he fancied he saw in them a compassion for himself, and the tears, which would not come before, broke forth at the sight of the innocent little animal.

No doubt Frisky's appealing look rose really from pity for himself for being dinnerless, but there is something in the mute affection of brute beasts in our hours of sorrow, that is very touching, and as Hugh sobbed and cried and wetted poor little Frisky's white coat, he felt relieved and stronger for the work before him.

"What shall I do with Frisky, sir, whilst I am away?" asked Hugh, who was making up to the little creature for his past neglect.

"I think you had best leave him with Lucy, Hugh, she is very fond of pets; and I am afraid he would not be exactly to Mrs Jenkin's mind," he replied. "Go and arrange about it now, and be quick, my boy, for the time is nearly up."

When Mr Everard and Hugh had walked to the station, the latter was surprised to see his master take tickets for both of them.

"Are you going to London also, sir?" he asked eagerly.

"Yes," answered Mr Everard. "You don't think I would leave you to take so melancholy a journey alone?"

Hugh only pressed his hand for answer, but he felt his kindness very deeply.

It was a melancholy journey at the best, though Mr

Everard tried to while away the time by talking to the boy on subjects he knew he was fond of. They were alone in the carriage for some considerable part of the way, and after Mr Everard had induced Hugh to take a little wine and some bread and meat, he said to him—

“Hugh, dear boy, I know I do not need to tell you to Whom to look for comfort ; if your very worst forebodings come to pass, remember that you have ‘a friend that sticketh closer than a brother ;’ but until your fears are confirmed, don’t lose hope that it may not be so bad as you think. It is very difficult to hope, I know, in the face of such bad tidings ; but it is our duty to trust in God’s mercy, and to look for an answer to our prayers, however hard it may be.”

Hugh’s lips were quivering and the tears running down his face as he averted his head and looked out of the window, without seeing anything. It was as hard to him to keep back his tears now, as it had been to shed them a few hours back, and he had a schoolboy’s shame of crying before others.

When he could command his voice, he placed his hand in Mr Everard’s, and said feelingly—

“You are so very kind to me, sir ; I wish I could do anything in return for it. You are as good to me as my own father could have been, had he been living.”

“I am glad to be able to comfort you a little, Hugh,” Mr Everard answered. “You have grown very dear to me during our short knowledge of one another. You must try and trust me always as a friend.”

Shortly after more people entered the carriage, and Mr Everard joining in the conversation with them, Hugh was left alone to his own sad reflections.

Outwardly he was alone, but the Master, of whom he was such a faithful little servant, was with him, and though sad, he was not miserable. He felt the preciousness of the Brotherhood that death can never sever ; he felt the support of the Divine Friend who had sent him this trial ; he could trust Him through everything, and felt strong enough to go through all, leaning on that Sacred Breast.

It was late when they reached London, past eight o'clock, as theirs had been a slow train, so that by the time they had reached their hotel and dined, it was bed-time for Hugh ; and he was so weary from the events of the day, as to be glad to retire.

Mr Everard, with his usual kind thoughtfulness, had ordered a double-bedded room, not wishing to leave Hugh alone at night, lest his sorrow might make him sleepless ; but when he followed him upstairs an hour or two later, he found the child worn out with fatigue, sleeping soundly and peacefully ; and regardless of the rattle of the London streets, he continued in that God-given rest till morning.

"I wonder what makes me love this boy so much," thought Mr Everard, as he stood over his little bed watching him in his sleep ; "I have had other frank, manly boys, with equally fine dispositions, under my care, but they have never won my heart as this lad has.

It must be, I think, his evident love for me. Strange that the boy should like me so much, for I have not spared him, poor child."

Most probably it was so. Hugh's affectionate nature had never resented in the smallest way the deprivation of pleasure Mr Everard had inflicted on him for his supposed transgression. It had made no difference in his love for, and his manner to his master, and the cheerful way in which he had accepted his punishment, and the confidence he so evidently felt in Mr Everard, were very winning.

By the earliest train that left on the following morning, Hugh started for Richmond.

Mr Everard did not accompany him any further, but he saw him into his carriage, and said at parting—

"God bless you, Hugh. Do not forget to telegraph to me as soon as you can, how you find your brother. I shall remain in town for the present, and if you or he wish to see me, remember I will come down directly."

In a very short time the remainder of Hugh's journey was completed, and he was driving along the dusty country road to his uncle's house.

How nervously he looked up at the windows as he entered the little garden. Thank God! the blinds were not drawn down. His greatest fear had been that he might not be in time to see Frank yet alive. He had quite made up his mind that the time had come for them to part; but oh! how he longed to see him and to hear his voice once more before he went!

The hall door was standing open, and dear Aunt Ethel waiting to receive him as he sprang out, and she answered the question in his eyes before he could speak.

"He is alive, dear," she whispered, kissing him fondly, "and we have better hope than we had yesterday."

Hugh tried to speak and answer her ; his lips parted and closed again, but no words came.

Aunt Ethel took him into the drawing-room, and told him some of the particulars of which he had heard nothing. Frank had partially recovered consciousness during the night, but was still in such a precarious state as necessitated the most perfect quiet, consequently Hugh could not be allowed to see him at present, nor indeed was his name to be even mentioned in his presence.

Mrs Sanderson was also in the house ; she had arrived yesterday evening on receipt of the news of her boy's danger, and was now with poor Jack, who lay free from pain, but feeling so fearfully weak and shattered, that he himself believed he was dying.

"It's no use Dr Coles saying otherwise, mother, I must be the best judge," he said to her. "I do not feel as if I should last many hours ; and a good thing for everyone connected with me too. I've done harm enough, God knows, so far, without living to bring more trouble on you all. Why I have lost all feeling in my feet and legs ; I believe I am dead so far already," placing his hand on his hip as he spoke.



Mrs Sanderson was a fair, frightened looking little woman, without much strength of either mind or body, but she was the fondest and most loving of mothers, and cried bitterly as she sat by her boy's side. She had been told by Dr Coles of the nature of Jack's injury, but she had not courage to communicate it to him.

"Don't fret so, mother dear," Jack went on, "I am very thankful, and it is much more than I deserve that I can die free from pain, and with you by my side. I never thought to see you again the night before last. How long ago it seems—it might be a week since I lay out there in the starlight, expecting every minute to be my last! How I longed to see you, mother, and ask you to forgive me all the pain I've caused you. You have forgiven me, haven't you?" he added, though he need not to have put the question, as he looked in the loving yearning face, bent so tenderly over him.

"Oh Jack," she said, "how can you ask me? If you have ever given me pain it has been through my own foolish incompetent way of training you; but you have given me much more happiness than aught else, dear boy, and if I lose you, I lose all earth holds for me."

Jack was an only child, and his father holding a Government appointment in India, where Mrs Sanderson's health would not allow her to be with him, he had seen his father but at rare intervals when on leave, and had been left almost entirely to the guardianship of his mother.

"How is Frank now?" he asked after a pause. He had heard last night that he had been mistaken in his conclusion that Frank was dead, and the knowledge had removed a great load of misery from his mind.

"He is about the same, I believe," she answered; "his brother arrived from school a little while ago—the one who was kept back, you know, for being so naughty."

Jack gave a deep sigh.

"I am glad he is come," he said, "I shall be glad to see him once again. Mother, ask Dr Coles when he comes this evening if I may do so."





## CHAPTER XXII.

### JACK TELLS THE TRUTH.

ON hearing from Mrs Sanderson of Jack's wish, Hugh proceeded to his room in the twilight of that evening. Jack's system had received so severe a shock that it



was still quite uncertain whether he would have power to rally from it, and as his desire to see Hugh was strong, Dr Coles thought it better to gratify his wish, than to distress and excite him by refusal.

Hugh was so full of pity for poor Sanderson

when they met again, that all remembrance of the personal grievance between them was utterly forgotten by him at the time.

"Well, Cameron," said Jack bitterly, "you've got your revenge, you see, without trying for it. I think you've had the best of it after all. Perhaps if we had all returned together, I might have smashed you up, as I have myself and poor Frank there. The laugh is on your side now."

"Don't talk like that, Jack, please don't," said Hugh, "I can't believe you think so ill of me. I'm just as sorry to see you so hurt, as you would be for me."

"I know that, old fellow," answered Sanderson. "You mustn't mind my nasty way of speaking. I am very glad you are come. I want to tell your people before I—go," he said with an effort, "the whole truth of that affair last term, and if I have not time to do so, for Dr Coles will not let me see any one else to-day, you must do it for me, remember."

"It is not worth while, dear Jack, indeed," urged Hugh; "it is all over now, and I assure you it has been nothing to what I expected. Don't trouble yourself about it any more, there's a good fellow."

"But Jack was not to be put off so easily, and when Hugh saw how opposition annoyed him and brought the hectic colour into his cheeks, he agreed that if Jack should be unable to explain matters himself, he would do so at any rate to his Uncle and Mr Everard.

They sat in silence for a few minutes after this, for Jack was exhausted by the effort of talking, and Hugh would have left him, had he not begged him to stay yet a while.

"I have more to say to you—in a few minutes," he

said, in his poor, weak voice. "I shan't have many opportunities of asking a favour of you. Don't go yet, Cameron, please."

What could Hugh do but comply, so he sat patiently by his side, waiting until Sanderson should speak again.

"Now I can go on," he said presently. "Cameron, I want so much, if possible, to see Mr Everard. My mind is so confused and troubled just now. I have so many thoughts and doubts all crowding in upon me at once, that I want some one to help me to arrange and solve them. I used to laugh at Everard in days gone by; God forgive me, but it was partly because I saw how good he was, and I was jealous of him. I think I could talk to him, and I know he would answer me faithfully. Do you think, Cameron, that should I last long enough he would come here to see me?"

"I know he would," answered Hugh. "He is in London now, and his last words to me were, that if wanted he would come here at once."

"Thank God," said Jack; "arrange it for me, will you? What a great comfort you are to me, Hugh."

Then he closed his eyes and fell into a troubled sleep, and Mrs Sanderson returning shortly to her post of watching, Hugh crept out of the room.

He was allowed to go to Frank's room now. The poor boy was still wandering, but much of his incoherent talk was addressed to his brother, and he seemed so impressed with the idea, that Hugh was with him, that it was thought his actual presence would do no harm.

Though Hugh had been prepared by Aunt Ethel to find Frank much changed, he was inexpressibly shocked at first sight of his brother. His face looked so drawn and small to what it had been when last he saw him. This was owing partly to his hair having been all cut off, and his head being covered with bandages steeped in cooling lotions; the room was darkened with a green blind, which cast a deathly shade upon his face, and he lay on his back with his thin arm outstretched, and his delicate white hand picking feebly at something he fancied he saw in the air.

Hugh could hardly bear to look at him thus, but by a strong effort he controlled himself, and took Frank's other hand and kissed it.

He turned his eyes, which looked unnaturally large, upon his brother, but evidently did not know him.

"Spiders," he said, "there are such lots of spiders, Hugh."

Then he rolled his head restlessly from side to side of the pillow, and called out—

"More to the right, Jack, more to the right, or she'll be over."

He was rehearsing the fearful moment of their accident, but his thoughts wandered next minute to other things.

"Poor Hugh," he sighed. "Where did you leave him Jack? we lost him somewhere."

Again he seemed to fancy himself in his old home, and addressed Uncle Fred, who was sitting near, as his father.

"It wasn't Hugh's fault, you know, dad. I told you all about it, didn't I? Everard never caught us though, and Hugh never split upon us, poor dear old boy!"

It was very terrible to hear him, especially to Hugh who had never seen anything of delirium before. Frank would doze now and then for a few minutes, and then wake with a scared startled look in his eyes, and try to sit up in bed, and sink back with a sigh from weakness.

Once he attempted to sing a few lines of a song, and the quavering notes, all out of tune, were very painful to listen to. Then he began part of a prayer they had used in their childhood, but stopped suddenly, and said :

"I've forgotten them all! You say it, Hughie."

It was a true word spoken unwittingly; poor Frank had forgotten his prayers for many weeks lately.

Hugh begged to be allowed to pass the night with him, and as Uncle Fred was anxious that Aunt Ethel should get some rest, he consented to the request, saying that he would himself stay and share his watch.





## CHAPTER XXIII.

### RESTORED.

ABOUT daybreak on the following morning, as Hugh was sitting close by the side of Frank's bed, resting his own poor weary little head on an unoccupied pillow, Frank, who had remained in an unbroken sleep for the last few hours, opened his eyes and looked fixedly at him.

Hugh returned his gaze as calmly as he could, fear ing even to speak, lest he should drive away the restored reason he believed he could detect.

Frank looked hard at him for another second, then a quiet smile of content flickered for a moment over his wan face, and tightening his hold on Hugh's hand, he murmured :

"Dear Hughie, darling old boy," and as if too exhausted to keep his eyes open any longer, sank back to sleep again immediately.

Hugh dared not stir, even to wipe away the tears of joy that ran down his face and wetted the pillow on which he lay, but he was too thankful and grateful to God for His merciful answer to his prayers, to mind discomfort, and though cramped by the position he had



assumed, he continued immovable till the sun was high in the sky, and Frank woke again, fearfully weak indeed, but rational, and by God's blessing, likely to do well.

And now Hugh, whom Uncle Fred insisted should leave his post for a while, and get some breakfast and fresh air, with a thankful and light heart left his brother's side.

How changed all seemed from yesterday; though his body was tired, and his eyes heavy from watching and anxiety, he felt so happy that he longed to sing. There was no room in the house where he was likely to be quiet and undisturbed for long during the daytime, so after he had bathed and changed his clothes, he ran into the garden, and there, in the little summer house which overlooked the lovely river, he knelt and thanked God for all His goodness.

How clearly he could feel the Fatherhood of God at this moment! That loving Father to Whose will he had tried to bow, Whom he had striven to trust, and Who now had given him back what he loved most on earth.

He had no more fear now—he dreaded no relapse or other evil. God would not have answered his prayers only to retake His gift; and with a heart as full of joy as if his brother were entirely restored to health, Hugh returned to the house, where he found breakfast ready, and Uncle Fred and Aunt Ethel waiting, for the first time, to take some with him.

"Frank is asleep again, Hugh, in a sound and healthy sleep," said Aunt Ethel, as she kissed him.

Uncle Fred, too, put his arm round him and gave him a congratulatory hug. The few words spoken by Frank in his delirium had not been lost upon Mr Manners, though he had apparently taken no notice of them.

"I have received a letter from Mr Everard this morning, Hugh," he said, "telling me, in answer to your telegram, that he will be at Richmond by the eleven o'clock train, and come on here at once. It will do you good to go in and meet him, don't you think so? We must not let Frank talk much for some days to come, so the less you two are together for a bit the better."

Of course Hugh liked this plan. When did he not like anything that threw him into Mr Everard's company?

"I will start at once, uncle. It is a quarter to ten now, and I should enjoy a good walk this morning." And hastily finishing his third plate of ham, for he had found his appetite again now, he ran off to get ready.

What a delightful morning it was to him as he walked along the rather uninteresting high road to Richmond.

"How lovely the country is," he thought, as he peeped into the hedges, which had as much dust as verdure on them just now. "I hope I shall always live in the country; and how well that jolly little bird is singing."

It was only a yellow hammer wheezing out its monotonous cry of "a little more bread and che-ese"; but it sounded lovely to the boy, whose heart was swelling with gratitude.

The train had arrived when he reached the station, and he caught sight of Mr Everard just about to hail a cab.

When Mr Everard felt his coat pulled, and turning round saw the beaming face of his little friend, he said, as he shook hands heartily—

“Why, Hugh! I did not expect to be met. I can see by your face that Frank is better, is he not?”

“Yes, sir,” answered Hugh. “He is out of danger, or I should not be here. Are you going to drive, or shall we go by water? We can go by the river all the way, if you like.”

“Then by river by all means,” said Mr Everard. “I feel rather smoke-dried from being in London, and have not had a pull on the river for years.” And consigning his portmanteau to a porter, they proceeded to the wharf.

As they were going, they encountered Mr Dupuis, who gladly joined them.

“I think we can dispense with a boatman, Dupuis,” said Mr Everard. “Hugh shall steer, and we will each take an oar. It is years since I rowed, but I was very fond of it in my Oxford days.”

Mr Dupuis' leisure had all been devoted to mental acquirements, but he was quite ready to do his best, and continued to do something or other with the oar, which he imagined to be rowing, until they reached their journey's end; but I think if it had not been for Mr Everard's clean, straight strokes, which cut the water

and sent the boat rapidly on her way, that they would not have arrived that night.

"Hard work, very," said Mr Dupuis, stopping to mop the perspiration from his face. "How *do* you manage to keep so cool?"

Mr Everard was looking quite comfortable in his white shirt and waistcoat.

"Let me take both oars, Dupuis," he said, laughing. "I'm more used to it, and it doesn't take so much out of me."

But Mr Dupuis would not consent to this, but following Mr Everard's example, stripped off his coat, which he hung over the side of the boat, and found on his arrival, with the sleeves wet to the elbows.

Mr Manners and Mr Everard had met before, but he had to be introduced to Aunt Ethel and Mrs Sanderson; and it was not until after their early dinner that Jack, who had been informed that Mr Everard had arrived, was ready to receive him.

Poor Jack's proud spirit was very broken now, by contrition for the past, and weakness of body. He held out his hand to Mr Everard when he entered the room, but he could not command his voice to speak; and Mr Everard, appearing not to notice his agitation, said kindly—

"How are you feeling to-day, Sanderson? a little stronger, are you not? Dr Coles seems to think so, though no doubt you must be suffering terribly still from weakness. I know something of that feeling, for

I lay many days as reduced as you are in my boyhood."

"Did you, sir," answered Jack, who had had time to recover himself. "I am very bad, worse I think than those about me believe. It is very kind of you to come and see me, for I don't deserve it, as you will acknowledge, when you hear all I have to tell you."

"If we none of us got but what we deserve, Jack, we should be badly off, both in this world and the next," replied Mr Everard. "I am very glad to be able to be of any use to you, and now try and tell me a little of what it is you have to say."

"I daresay it will not be much news to you after all, sir," said Jack sadly. "I believe you suspected there was something behind, at the time of Cameron's being discovered out at night."

And then Jack went on to tell his own share in the business; he made very light of Frank's part, saying, what was the truth, that it was owing to his own example and persuasion that Frank had been induced to accompany him, and that he had ever since been desirous of taking the blame, had not Jack held him to his promise previously made.

Mr Everard listened very quietly, he did not add to the weight of Sanderson's trouble by one expression of horror at his conduct. He knew that the boy's conscience was condemning him sufficiently without that, but when Jack had finished his story, he said gravely and kindly—

"I am very glad you have told me, Jack. To 'confess one's faults one to another' is a plain duty, only it must not end there, we must confess them to God also, must we not?"

Mr Everard felt that he was treading on very delicate ground. He had never yet seen in Sanderson any evidence of religion, and he feared for the answer he might receive, but he could not in very faithfulness lose this opportunity of speaking to the possibly dying boy. He was not prepared for the grief which his words called forth.

"Ah, that is just it, sir; that is where I want you to help me: I am so miserable when I think of all my past life! It has not been only in the case I told you of; I have deceived you in fifty ways when you never suspected me. I was one of the worst when Watson was found out. I have wronged my mother, and you, and Hugh, and Frank, and everyone I came in contact with, and God has been so merciful to me after all! If He had let me die that fearful night when I lay in agony of mind and body, it would have been but what I deserved; but He did not; He brought help to me, and has let me see my mother once more, and He has spared Frank's life, which otherwise would have been on my head, and has given me time to make my peace with Hugh and with yourself, and yet I have neglected Him for years. Until these last few days I have never prayed in earnest since I was a little child. I have laughed at religion and those who valued it, and now when I would gladly turn to Him, I am afraid."

"And tell me why you are afraid, Jack," said Mr Everard gently.

"It is too late ; He must be sick and tired of me by this time, I think," the boy replied.

"Has your mother yet got sick and tired of you ?" asked Mr Everard ; "you have tried her all your life, you tell me, and she has but a human heart, but her love and pity for you are as strong as ever. God might well indeed get sick and tired of us all, but His love is stronger than that of any earthly father or mother ever given to man. If you will only believe and accept His love, depend upon it, it is yours already."

"It has always seemed to me such a farce," replied the boy, "for people to go their own way all their lives, and turn religious at the last minute on their deathbeds. I have never believed in it in others, and how can I resort to it myself ?"

"I grant that many deathbed repentances are unsatisfactory," answered his master, "but we ought not to take upon ourselves to determine that any are insincere or unavailing. There is no limit to the power of Christ's atoning blood. And as we know by our Blessed Lord's words to the penitent thief, He will forgive even at the eleventh hour. Don't think so much of yourself, Jack ; think of Jesus who died for you, and is now drawing you by His Holy Spirit to trust in Him."

"I do think of Him," said Jack, crying bitterly as did Peter when Christ looked at him ; "it is when I

think of how I have treated Him that I am so miserable."

"Then tell Him so, dear Jack," answered Mr Everard, tenderly. "Take all your contrition and trouble to the foot of His Cross and lay it before Him. He is only waiting for you to do so, to give you pardon and peace."







## CHAPTER XXIV.

### PEACE.

AND though the peace that Mr Everard spoke of did not come to Jack immediately, it did come in all its fulness before long. He and Mr Everard had many more talks together as Jack's strength would bear it; and after a few days had elapsed, and it was time for Mr Everard to return home, he took upon himself the painful task of informing Jack of his probably hopeless condition for life. He would gladly have avoided this duty, but Mrs Sanderson felt unequal to undertake it, and Mr Everard never spared himself if he could thereby spare others.

So on the morning of the day of his departure, as he was sitting by Jack's side, who was thanking him gratefully for all the help he had given him, Mr Everard said—

"Before we part, Jack, there is one thing I must say to you."

"Anything you like, sir," answered he. "I am sure you have earned the right to say what you will to me. I believe that it will be the last time we shall talk together in this world. I do not recover strength at all,

I am sure I am sinking, though not so fast, as I at first thought."

"And you are quite content to live or die, as God may ordain, Jack?"

"I am more than content to die," he replied; "as to living, my thoughts have never turned that way at all."

"It is of that I want to speak," said Mr Everard. "Supposing that it should be God's will that you should yet remain on earth, disabled as you are, my poor boy, can you be content to serve Him in the way He sees best?"

"As I am?" asked Jack, opening his eyes in wonder; "always as I am now, helpless and useless?"

"You need not be useless, Jack. God finds a use for all His children; neither is it impossible that your condition may be slightly improved; but it is more than probable that you are likely to live, though not likely to recover your former strength. Try to bear it, Sander-son, as God's child should."

Jack covered his face as he strove to realise the fact. Not to die yet! He had grown to long to leave this world, and see at once the face of that dear Redeemer he had learned to love so lately. Not to die! but to linger on in weakness and in sinfulness, a burden to himself and all around him! It was a great trial of Jack's faith and trust in God's mercy. It was so easy to die forgiven, and surrounded by all his earthly friends, and in the first fervour of his conversion, and reconciliation to his God. It was so hard to resign this idea, and

take up his daily cross of suffering, and linger on, he knew not for how long, battling against his own evil nature, and striving to be contented against loss of health and strength !

Mr Everard could guess the struggle which was going on in his pupil's heart, and he sat silently by until it should be over, praying earnestly that the lad might have help given him to bear it like a true soldier of Christ.

Presently Jack asked—"What is it then, sir, this feeling I have thought was death ; is it paralysis ?"

"It is, Jack ; it is paralysis of the lower part of the body. You will gain strength after a while, so as to make life more enjoyable, but there is no hope that you will ever walk again in this life, my dear boy."

"I will try to bear it," answered Sanderson. "I will try to be content and cheerful, but oh ! dear Mr Everard, it *is* such a disappointment."

"I am sure it is," he answered with emotion ; "but if you try to bear it, Jack, Jesus will help you, and will make the burden light. He will not keep you suffering one minute longer than He sees necessary ; you can glorify Him as well, and better perhaps, by patient endurance of His will, than by the most triumphant deathbed ever yet witnessed. You need not look forward to months or years of imprisonment. Pray for grace sufficient for each day as it comes, and trust the future with Him, to take or leave you, as He sees best."

And when after a while, when Mr Everard had taken

leave of and left Jack, Mrs Sanderson came fearfully into the room, dreading the grief she expected to see in her son's face, he opened his arms to her, and said smiling—

“ So, mother, were you afraid to see me ? You must put up with your poor shattered boy a little longer, it seems ; but I do not fear that you will tire of me ! ”

He forced a cheerfulness he could not feel as yet, for her sake. The pluck which Jack had always possessed was being used to a good purpose now.

And though I do not pretend that he was always cheerful, and a perfect character from henceforward, yet cheerfulness for the most part was his characteristic. And if he did relapse into peevishness or unthankful thoughts, it was never without deep sorrow for it afterwards.

As time passed on, and his mind was more at ease, his strength returned, as far as it was ever likely to do, and he was allowed by Dr Coles to return home with his mother.

Before leaving she had given orders that the declivity which had proved so disastrous to her son should be protected by a strong iron pailing, that others might not be exposed to a like accident.

Mr Everard had, of course, seen Frank also, and spoken to him very seriously about his past folly. But Frank had learned a practical lesson which was likely to last him his life-time, and arrest him, happily, ere he had diverged far from the right road. His love and

confidence in his brother was all restored, and indeed far stronger than it had ever been before.

Of course the subject of Hugh's unmerited punishment had been discussed between Uncle Fred and Mr Everard, but little had been said to Hugh about it, as it necessarily involved so much that was painful, but Hugh knew by the few words of praise that were given him, and the increased affection shown him, that it was understood, and he could not help feeling thankful that he was at last clear of blame in Mr Everard's eyes.

And now, as he was about to leave them, Hugh could part from him with a happier heart than he had felt for some time. The holidays were fast coming to an end. It was nearly five weeks since their commencement, and in another ten days school would re-open.

Frank would not be fit to return for a while, so was to remain at home until quite restored to health, but Herbert was to accompany Hugh on his return, which arrangement gave great satisfaction to both of them.

"Good-bye, my dear boy," said Mr Everard, pressing Hugh's hand, "I shall look out for you ten days hence."

And I don't think it is often that a master and pupil part with so strong a desire to meet again, as did Mr Everard and Hugh Cameron.

Hugh's thoughts reverted to the day when Frank and he were travelling to Fitzcoombe, and Sanderson had described Mr Everard to them, and he sighed as he thought of Jack then and Jack now.

But he need not have sighed. Jack was not so funny, perhaps, but he was much happier, even with his great calamity to carry about with him. And the fun, too—all the harmless fun—was pretty sure to return, for nothing can give us such light hearts or capability of enjoyment, as true religion.





## CHAPTER XXV.

### THE RIGHT TRIUMPHS.

WHEN school reopened for the following term, and the boys were all assembled for morning lessons, Mr Everard addressed them as follows :

“ I am very glad to see so many of you back again, my boys, but we are less by two than when we parted for the holidays. You all know the melancholy accident which has happened to poor Sanderson. He will never be able to rejoin you ; but Frank Cameron will return shortly.

“ There is one matter which I feel it my duty to set right amongst you at once. It refers to the occasion which gave rise to Hugh Cameron’s detention here during the past holidays, as I have since found without just cause.

“ He himself is anxious that the matter should be dropped, as an explanation of the whole affair must necessarily involve others. In compliance with his wish I shall not therefore enter into particulars. To a few of you they are known, but to all I wish to exonerate Cameron from all blame in the matter, and to express my regret that he should have been unjustly

punished. I must always respect and admire the generous way in which he has behaved throughout the whole business."

Hugh felt most uncomfortable during this speech, and was heartily glad when it was over. As he and the other boys passed up to class, Bourdillon pushed Hugh forward, saying :

"Cameron will take his old place, won't he, sir? He only went down because of that mistake?"

"You are right, Bourdillon," replied the master, and Hugh, looking very red and feeling very happy, found himself, as he had so often hoped to be, reinstalled in his old place, both at Mr Everard's elbow and in his good opinion.

Dr Cole's prediction concerning Sanderson proved a correct one. Very nearly as we left him in our last chapter, we find him again after the lapse of two years. He is lying on an invalid carriage, drawn by a pony, which is just now grazing on the lawn of one of the finest gentlemen's seats in Somerset. By Jack's side his mother sits working ; where Jack is you may be sure his mother is also, and their society is equally dear to one another. He is still delicate in appearance ; his face is thin, with a complexion like a girl's, but it wears an expression of peace and happiness which it never bore in former years. God, who softens as much as possible all our sorrows, has given Jack ample means to alleviate his own trial and those of others round him.



By the death of his godfather he has inherited the property where we find him, and is now expecting the return of his father from India, to whom it need no longer be a necessity to work for the provision of his helpless son. Both he and his mother are looking forward to Major Sanderson's arrival. With his help and by God's blessing, Jack hopes yet to find that his life may be a useful one, and many are the plans formed by him for the improvement of his estate, and the condition of his tenantry.

He is not likely to be a long-lived man, but the energy and resolution of his character, are likely to crowd a great deal of work into a short life, and he has learnt to be content to wait quietly until his work is done.

His friendship with Mr Everard and the Camerons has remained very strong ever since they parted at Richmond. Hugh and Frank are indeed at the present time staying with him.

"Mother," says Jack, "where are the boys?" (He always used to think himself a man, you remember, and indeed there is a great difference between him and the Camerons now. Jack's experience of suffering has really aged him.)

"They are now coming," she replies. "They are going for a ride together."

And soon Hugh and Frank appear, mounted on Jack's horses, useless to him, poor lad, except to lend to others.

They are much what they were in appearance,

excepting for being taller, still so alike as to be often mistaken for one another.

A little sigh half escapes Jack at the remembrance of his own love of riding and of everything to do with



Mr. Dupuis still plods on at his studies.

horses, but he coughs it down and changes it to a smile as he watches them pass down the drive and out of the lodge gates.

"That is a good thought of Hugh's about the lodge-keeper," he says. "I should not have thought of Jim Giles otherwise. His father is dead, and Jim can bring his mother here and support her as lodge-keeper. He is one of my sort," he adds laughing, "a bad 'un to look at and a bad 'un to go."

Mr Dupuis still plods on at his studies, and still makes collections of insects, and I am afraid that the boys take advantage of his short sight and impose upon him for a time occasionally, but the kindly heart that beats under his untidy suit of clothes is known and respected by every boy in the school.

And now I have mentioned all save Mr Everard, and I wish that I could leave him with a brighter lot than the care of twenty or more tiresome English boys.

If men could have their deserts in this world I would give him just such another estate as has Jack Sanderson, with health and every other blessing one could desire, and leave him comfortable and at ease for life !

But Ease and Comfort are not what he ever sought for. His aim and his desire are to work while he can for his Master above ; and in that service, content and happy, let us leave him. He is doing double duty, not merely striving to do all he can in his own person, but helping those he trains to serve God also.

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